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# WORLD WAR II

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THIRD EDITION

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Follow the Allied advance into the heart of Nazi rule

## PEARL HARBOR

Find out how the United States was forced into the war







# Welcome

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On 1 September 1939, German soldiers marched into Poland; it was the start of a conflict that would consume the world for six years. Soldiers would die for their country, spies would risk life and limb, and millions would be brutally murdered in horrific conditions.

In Everything You Need to Know About... World War II, uncover how hostilities in Europe reached breaking point in the 1930s and explore the unlikely alliance of the Axis powers before heading to Nazi Germany to find out what life was really like under Hitler's rule. Join the troops fighting for France and dominance in the Atlantic, and meet the men who battled it out for control of Asia with blood, toil, tears and sweat.

From the war rooms under London to the war-torn streets of Berlin and beyond, it's time to get up close and personal with a conflict that changed the face of Europe forever.

「 FUTURE 」





# WORLD WAR II

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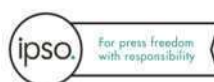


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# The Road to War

The roots of the Second World War lay amid the carnage of 1918 as Germany refused to accept the humiliation of defeat



The German Navy's Flag Officer for U-boats (Führer der Unterseeboote, or FdU), Kommodore Karl Dönitz, stood before the situation

maps that adorned one wall of his temporary Wilhelmshaven headquarters. Small blue flags marked the positions of all active U-boats; far too few for his liking, lost within the expanse of the Atlantic Ocean and North Sea. It was the morning of 3 September 1939 and he had only recently moved into borrowed offices within the Naval Radio Station. A more permanent headquarters was under construction in nearby Sengwarden, but until it was operational, he and his staff would work from the tree-lined avenue named Totenweg.

At 11am GMT he received a curt radio message from his superiors in Berlin: "War with England." Only minutes later, a young aide burst into the room holding a teletype from Germany's Naval Signals Intelligence section (known as B-Dienst). The brief text was of a deciphered Royal Navy transmission: "Most immediate to all His Majesty's Ships: Total Germany repetition Total Germany." All present knew that the coded phrase instructed Royal Navy forces to begin hostilities with Germany.

Dönitz was visibly shaken by the news. Perhaps he had harboured hopes that the great gambler within the Reich Chancellery would manage yet another diplomatic coup that would avert war. As his Staff Officers fell silent, Dönitz abruptly left the room to collect his thoughts. Within half an hour he had returned with the air of renewed determination and resolve that led to his men nicknaming him 'The Lion' (Der Löwe).

The first day of a new U-boat battle against Great Britain and its empire had begun. Within hours, France had also declared war on Germany.

Dönitz, like his commander-in-chief Großadmiral Erich Raeder, knew very well the ramifications of conflict with a great naval power such as Great Britain. Both had served during World War I that had ended with the German downfall of 1918, their nation then impoverished by harsh armistice terms and wracked by years of revolutionary turmoil. The rise to power of Adolf Hitler's National Socialist Workers' Party in 1933 had brought a semblance of order to Germany, and the beginning of a secret rearmament programme to restore military strength forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles.

As the guns fell silent on 11 November 1918, Germany ended World War I a broken nation. Bolshevik revolution sparked among the listless crews of the Imperial German Navy's Grand Fleet that had lain at anchor for two years, and were soon fanned into the flames of full-scale revolt that spread throughout Germany. The harsh dictated terms of the Treaty of Versailles severely curtailed German military power, with U-boats, tanks and military aircraft forbidden. Territorial losses, a forced acceptance of total responsibility for the conflict and crippling reparation payments sowed seeds of resentment that took root in extreme politics.

Unable to face the humiliation of defeat, many Germans took refuge within the myth that disloyal elements of the home front had 'stabbed the German soldier in the back'. Those perceived to be of questionable loyalty - notably socialists, communists and Jews - were viewed with suspicion and hostility, and the atmosphere





Neville Chamberlain, flanked by German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and Britain's ambassador to Germany, Neville Henderson, on his third and final visit to Hitler at the end of September 1938

## LAND OF THE RISING GUN

**How years of Japanese aggression culminated in the vicious Pacific War**

The fighting in the Pacific Theatre during World War II may have lasted for four bloody years, but the seeds of the clash between the United States and Japan that would claim 36 million casualties were planted over a decade before a shot was fired.

At the dawning of the 1920s, many of Japan's leading minds believed that Europe's influence was waning and that this was an opportunity for Japan to emerge as a new global power. However, in order for Japan to achieve its lofty ambition it would need to secure control of the nations on its doorstep first, chiefly China.

In 1931 Japan took a decisive step towards establishing the empire it craved by invading Manchuria, a vast region in eastern China. The world reacted in horror at such blatant imperialism, yet the protestations of the League of Nations did nothing to deter Japan from establishing a puppet state and violently suppressing all resistance.

By 1940 Japan controlled much of China, having seized its capital, Nanjing, in a savage bout of rape and murder in late 1937. Not yet satisfied with its new territories, Japan proceeded to march into Indochina, a move that was met by US president Franklin Roosevelt halting all sales of iron, steel and fuel to Japan. Shorn of the oil it needed to continue its expansion, Japan faced a stark choice: back down or go to war with the United States and its allies. Fatefully, Japan opted for the latter, turning its avaricious gaze on Allied interests in Asia as part of its 'Southern Operation'.

Despite the reservations of the Imperial Navy about fighting a protracted war against the United States, as the winter of 1941 loomed the government of the newly installed Prime Minister Hideki Tojo boldly stated that a sudden and shocking blow would be enough to force the US to negotiate. It was decided that the target would be Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, home to the US Pacific Fleet.

On 7 December, as their planes awaited take-off aboard aircraft carriers north of Hawaii, the Japanese pilots must have been equally nervous and excited. They had no idea what they were about to unleash.

The Japanese enter a Chinese town during the 2nd Japan-China War







A WWI veteran, Hitler excelled at the revolutionary politics that dominated Germany, appealing to a widespread sense of aggrieved nationalism

became ripe for Hitler's incendiary brand of politics to blossom.

For those like Dönitz who had keenly felt the dishonour of his revolutionary navy, Hitler's promise of a revitalised nation that could once again stand alongside the world's other great powers was intoxicating. However, as war was declared, he knew that the German Navy (named 'Kriegsmarine' in 1935) was woefully unprepared for the struggle that would follow.

## BRITAIN'S EMPIRE THREATENED

It was not only Germany that ended World War I exhausted and weakened. Though Britain was among the triumphant nations and maintained its far-flung empire, it was indebted to the United States for £900 million in war loans – an amount that was due for immediate repayment.

An island nation, the United Kingdom remained the world's pre-eminent naval power in 1918. The Royal Navy provided security for global imperial dependencies and the trade that the home nation needed to survive. However, World War I had illustrated the vulnerability of those same trade routes that the Royal Navy sought to protect. Britain had been brought to the brink of collapse during 1917 by a U-boat force that numbered a total of only 105 boats, only half of which were suitable for high seas operations.

## "As war was declared he faced the Royal Navy with 57 U-boats, and only 20 of them suitable for Atlantic operations"

The prestigious surface battle fleets had been the focus of all navies at the outbreak of conflict in 1914, only a relatively few military visionaries realising the full potential of the submarine. Britain's admiral of the fleet, Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson, VC, had declared all submarines "underhand, unfair and damned un-English" in 1901, but it was a German U-boat that struck an initial blow to the Royal Navy by a demonstration of the weapon's destructive potential. On 22 September 1914, Otto Weddigen and his crew of 28 men aboard U-9 sank three British heavy cruisers in less than an hour, killing 62 officers and 1,397 men, leaving only 837 survivors. Against merchant shipping they were even more effective.

Initially, U-boats had obeyed 'Prize Rules', but on 1 February 1917, Germany unleashed an "unrestricted campaign" that allowed U-boats to sink on sight any suspect ship, and Allied shipping losses rocketed. Within two months Britain faced defeat as starvation loomed and the

country's war industries teetered on the brink of stoppage after U-boats destroyed nearly 900,000 tons of merchant shipping in April alone.

Hidebound in tradition, the Royal Navy was unable to counter this most deadly menace. Only intense pressure from cabinet ministers and some clear-minded naval officers convinced them to adopt the Napoleonic strategy of convoying ships during May. From July onwards, the monthly losses never exceeded 500,000 tons. With that, Germany had lost its U-boat war.

## PEACE FOR OUR TIME

Hitler's rise to power from the tumult of German politics culminated in his election as chancellor in 1933, followed by a referendum the following year that merged the post of chancellor and president; the new title of Führer und Reichskanzler (leader and chancellor) finally gave Hitler total dictatorial power.

The race for rearmament intensified. During 1933, Germany had withdrawn from



both the League of Nations, which had been established to foster international peace, and its disarmament conference in Geneva. The German delegation, headed by Joseph Goebbels, had proposed international disarmament to Germany's level and had been thoroughly rebuffed by France.

In 1935 Hitler formally repudiated the Treaty of Versailles and announced German rearmament following two years of covert development both within the country and beyond its borders. Fearing that French intransigence would once again provoke a German-led European arms race, Britain signed a bilateral deal with Germany on 18 June that became the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. In tacit acknowledgement of Germany's flagrant breach of the Versailles Treaty, the agreement limited the Kriegsmarine's size to 35 per cent that of the Royal Navy, although there was a specific clause that gave Germany "the right to possess a submarine tonnage equal to the total submarine tonnage possessed by the Members of the British Commonwealth of Nations".

This agreement, which provoked strong French condemnation, was designed to allay fears of German expansionist aims in Europe. Combined with a German-Polish non-aggression pact signed in 1934, it appeared externally as though Nazi Germany was only interested in regaining an international standing denied by the Versailles Treaty.

However, Hitler's rearmament plans were secretly set on supporting wider territorial

ambition. During 1936, the Wehrmacht marched into the Rhineland, which had been demilitarised since 1918, in a direct contravention of treaty terms - the action was met by French protests and bluster, but nothing stronger. During March 1938 Austria was amalgamated into the Third Reich, and during September Hitler demanded the return of the Sudetenland that had been ceded to a newly created Czechoslovak state after World War I.

British prime minister Neville Chamberlain met with Hitler in Berchtesgaden on 15 September and, following two further meetings, agreed to his demands. French prime minister Édouard Daladier followed suit three days later. The Czechs were not invited to either meeting, after which Chamberlain declared from the steps of number 10 Downing Street that the accord signified "peace for our time". On 15 March 1939, the Wehrmacht occupied the Czech provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, including Prague, and all illusions that Hitler's ambition could be contained were finally dispelled.

## BUILDING THE MACHINERY OF WAR

The likelihood of war with Britain had increased since March 1939. Chamberlain obtained French agreement to guarantee Poland's independence and come to its aid if threatened. Incensed by the action, Hitler promptly renounced the Anglo-German Naval Agreement along with his non-aggression pact with Poland. With international tension rising, Großadmiral Raeder

was gratified to learn of an intense building plan (named 'Plan Z') to bring about surface fleet parity with the Royal Navy. Privately, Hitler assured his naval chief that there would be no chance of war before 1944 at the earliest; 'Plan Z' was scheduled for completion by 1948. Raeder remained convinced that any naval struggle with Britain or France would be fought with grand fleets, despite Dönitz's intense lobbying for consideration of his U-boat service.

The conflicting demands of rearmament left the Kriegsmarine with few resources. Priority was given to army and air force units, and by the outbreak of war, none of the ships scheduled as part of Plan Z had achieved any significant stages of construction. Within a year, the plan was scrapped and only those major surface vessels that predated it were completed. The scarce resources would have been better used in U-boat construction.

Mindful of 1917, Dönitz maintained that to strangle Britain's maritime trade and establish an effective blockade he would need 300 U-boats: one-third on station, one-third in transit and the rest undergoing refit and repair. As war was declared he faced the Royal Navy with 57 U-boats, and only 20 of them suitable for Atlantic operations. Opposing the Kriegsmarine was a Royal Navy fleet that had seven aircraft carriers, 15 battleships and battlecruisers, 66 cruisers, 184 destroyers and 60 submarines.

On 1 September 1939, the Wehrmacht invaded Poland and within two days Germany was at war with the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth and France. The first U-boat attack of the conflict appeared an ominous portent of what was to follow. Despite firmly instructed to obey 'Prize Rules', the commander of U-30, Fritz-Julius Lemp, mistakenly identified a target ship as an armed merchant cruiser and torpedoed her without warning. That ship was in fact the 13,465-ton passenger steamer SS Athenia, which sank killing 98 passengers and 19 crew members.

The war on Britain's ocean trade links was about to begin, and in London the first lord of the admiralty, Winston Churchill, was in no doubt as to its significance: "The Battle of the Atlantic was the dominating factor all through the war. Never for one moment could we forget that everything happening elsewhere, on land, at sea, or in the air, depended ultimately on its outcome, and amid all other cares, we viewed its changing fortunes day by day with hope or apprehension."







# Axis of Evil

In the wake of World War I, ruthless ambition, dark determination and lust for power drove three men to plunge the world into an era of death and terror

Words Frances White



# Germany

## ADOLF HITLER 1889-1945

**Leader of Nazi Germany,  
Commander-in-Chief**

A corporal in the German Army, Hitler earned many medals for bravery until he was supposedly injured in a mustard gas attack. He then became involved in the German Workers' Party and used his skill as an orator to dominate the political world.

## NAZI HIGH COMMAND

### HERMANN GÖRING 1893-1946

**Commander-in-Chief  
of the Luftwaffe**

A veteran ace fighter pilot of World War I, Göring was a close confidant of Hitler and quickly rose through the ranks of the Nazi Party. While he enjoyed success after the attack on Poland, Göring later became consumed in fighting his rivals within the party.



### JOSEPH GOEBBELS 1897-1945

**Minister of  
Propaganda**

Rejected by the army due to his clubbed foot, Goebbels' embittered feelings drove him to the Nazi Party. He soon became one of the most powerful people in Nazi Germany, but his devious tactics earned him the nickname 'Poison Dwarf'.



## One man's quest to reclaim his country's honour



Everything was perfectly aligned for Adolf Hitler's rise to power. The army veteran had tasted the bitter pill of German defeat in World War I and witnessed the once-great nation's descent into a broken land that could barely feed its own people. Determined to rebuild the country, he joined the German Workers' Party and his charismatic speeches soon caught the nation's attention. He was saying everything the struggling people wanted to hear – he promised them food, employment and, most importantly, reclaimed pride. The ranks of the Nazi Party swelled and the people spoke; in July 1932 they voted Hitler and he was appointed chancellor.

In control of all of German life and having banned all other political parties, Hitler and his Nazi Party focused their efforts on unravelling the Treaty of Versailles. The Führer legitimised his actions by claiming the treaty denied Germany adequate "living space". One by one, Hitler broke the post-war agreements. He withdrew the country from the League of Nations, built up the military and began to stretch Germany's legs, occupying the German Rhineland, annexing Austria and invading Czechoslovakia. He was testing his enemies. He had already angered France and Britain, who promised to declare war if he invaded Poland, and he was well aware that alone he didn't stand a chance of taking on the Soviet Union – his ultimate goal. Hitler was ruthless and power-hungry, but he wasn't stupid. He knew he couldn't achieve his goals with German forces alone. He needed help. He needed allies.

## Machines of war



### Messerschmitt Bf 109

A trailblazer of modern fighter planes of the era, the Bf 109 formed the backbone of the German air force. Originally used in the Spanish Civil War, this fighter plane was constantly developed and improved upon throughout the war. The Bf 109 became the most produced fighter aircraft in history and was supplied to many Axis countries, not just Germany.

**STRENGTHS** Small, fast, powerful, cheap to produce

**WEAKNESSES** Narrow wheel track making it unstable on ground, hard to control in high winds



### Tiger I

When German forces encountered the impressive Soviet tanks during their invasion of the Soviet Union, they realised they would need to produce their own. The Tiger I was their answer. With a focus on firepower and armour, the Tiger I was employed on all German battlefronts. Five British Sherman tanks were generally needed to take down a Tiger I.

**STRENGTHS** Powerful 88mm gun, near-indestructible armour

**WEAKNESSES** Limited mobility, frequent breakdowns, difficult to transport



### Bismarck

One of the most famous ships of the 20th century, Bismarck was one of the largest vessels ever built by a European country and served as a symbol of Hitler's supremacy and power. In design Bismarck was a throwback to the ships of World War I, and at a massive 50,000 tons it defied the restrictions placed on the German Navy following the war.

**STRENGTHS** Supremely strong armour, speed, mobility

**WEAKNESSES** Lack of turret protection, steering issues made it difficult to keep on course



# Italy

The would-be Caesar desperate to carve out an empire to rule

**B**enito Mussolini had big plans for Italy. He was the father of the Fascist Party and had built it from the ground up, swelling its ranks with embittered war veterans. By 1922 Italy had descended into political chaos and the king had no option but to appoint Mussolini prime minister. Mussolini was intelligent, shrewd and ambitious, and when his leadership brought new jobs to the unemployed, he became popular too. He was a war hero who had fought on the front lines in World War I until he was injured, and the pride he wished to instil in his country drove his ruthless actions.

Mussolini believed it was his destiny to re-forge the Roman Empire with himself ruling as a modern-day Caesar. In 1935 he invaded Ethiopia with the full might of his army. The ill-equipped Ethiopians easily fell and the Italian Empire grew. When civil war broke out in Spain, Mussolini leapt on the opportunity to spread his influence and sent support to the fascists.

Mussolini was making enemies, and fast. But there was one nation that offered support - Nazi Germany. The ruthless actions of the Italian dictator caught Hitler's attention and he invited him to Germany with aims to impress the brash Italian leader. Mussolini too had been paying close attention to Hitler. With the return of the Roman Empire as his aim, Mussolini was keen to hold a prime spot at the table if the world was to be carved apart. If it went well, the meeting of these two power-hungry dictators could be the beginning of a strong and dangerous partnership.



**BENITO MUSSOLINI**  
1883-1945

**Prime Minister, Duce (leader) of Fascism**

When Italy entered World War I, Mussolini broke his socialist ties and became a fascist. He organised supporters into armed squads, and he used terror and intimidation to become dictator.

## FATHERS OF FASCISM

**ITALO GARIBOLDI**  
1879-1970

**Commander at the Battle of Stalingrad**

Garibaldi's military skill saw him rise through the ranks of the Italian Army, receiving several medals, including one for service in the bloody Battle of Stalingrad. By 1941 he had been made supreme commander of the Italian forces in Africa, and in 1942 he became the head of the army in Russia.



**UGO CAVALLERO**  
1880-1943

**Chief of Italian Supreme Command, Marshal of Italy**

A talented tactician, Cavallero achieved success during World War I and became Mussolini's Undersecretary of War in 1925. When Italy entered World War II, he was made commander-in-chief of the Italian Supreme Command and was involved in many major battles.



## Machines of war



### Macchi C.202 Folgore

This aircraft served as proof that the Italian Air Force was capable of producing a world-class fighter plane. The Folgore saw service on all the fronts where Italy fought during the war, proving itself a deadly foe.

**STRENGTHS** Speed, manoeuvrability

**WEAKNESSES** Under-gunned, inefficient oxygen system, unreliable radio



### Zara-class cruiser

The Zara cruisers were developed to combat their French-designed counterparts. By using the French designs as a base, the Zara cruisers were heavily armoured and powerful. The British Navy struggled to match them when they faced each other in conflicts in the Mediterranean Sea.

**STRENGTHS** Heavy firepower, well armoured

**WEAKNESSES** Not able to carry radar



### L3 tankette

This two-man tankette saw action before, during and after World War II. It was the most common Italian armoured fighting vehicle throughout the conflict, with between 2,000 and 2,500 L3 tankettes built in various models and also sold to a variety of countries.

**STRENGTHS** Cheap to produce, speed

**WEAKNESSES** Thin armour, weak firepower



## Machines of war



### Mitsubishi A6M Zero

A symbol of Japan's aerial power, the Zeroes served throughout the war from the attack on Pearl Harbor to the very last kamikaze missions. There were 11,283 produced between 1939 and 1945, and the planes were regarded as near invincible.

**STRENGTHS** Long range, manoeuvrability

**WEAKNESSES** Limited firepower, armour and engine power



### Mitsubishi G4M Betty

Nicknamed the 'Flying Cigar' due to its shape, this Japanese bomber operated from the start of the war through to the end, with a total of 2,435 built.

**STRENGTHS** Incredible range, high speed

**WEAKNESSES** No armour plating or protection for crew, unprotected fuel tanks that easily ignited



### Yamato

This gigantic battleship was the heaviest and most powerful armed battleship ever constructed. It was specifically designed to counter the United States' battleship fleet.

**STRENGTHS** Massive firepower, speed

**WEAKNESSES** Structural weaknesses in the armour made it susceptible to air-dropped torpedoes



### HIROHITO 1901-89

**Emperor of Japan, Commander of the Imperial General Headquarters**

Hirohito became emperor in 1926. Although in theory he had extreme authority, he gave much of his power to ministers. As a result, his personal involvement in Japan's expansionist policies remains a subject of debate.

## LEADERS OF IMPERIALISM

### FUMIMARO KONOE 1891-1945

**Prime Minister of Japan, 1937-41**

Born to a noble family, Konoe was made premier in 1937. When Japanese troops clashed with the Chinese he was keen to avoid an all-out war, and as the conflict escalated he resigned.



### HIDEKI TOJO 1884-1948

**Prime Minister of Japan, 1941-44; Minister of War, 1940-44**

A decorated general, Tojo became prime minister after Konoe's resignation. He supported expansionist policies, was responsible for the attack on Pearl Harbor, and pumped nationalist indoctrination into the education system.

## Japan

### The developing power striving for domination

**J**apan needed help. The country had undergone a dramatic industrialisation in the mid 19th century and now considered itself a major world player.

The rest of the world, however, disagreed. Japan had played a part in the Allied victory in World War I but the Western powers were wary of Japan's growing imperialist tendencies. Instead of forging powerful new alliances, Japan found its military limited and America even prohibited Japanese immigration into the country. To the Japanese nationalists these were racist actions, and those who could have been allies became enemies.

This was bad news for Japan. It was struggling under a domestic crisis and economic collapse flooded the country in a brutal depression. Control slipped away from the government and the military began to act alone. Eventually, even the role of prime minister was filled by an admiral. Desperately in need of natural resources and hungry for the power it felt unfairly deprived of, Japan undertook plans for a unification of Asia under Japanese leadership. This meant one thing - an invasion of their long-time rivals, China.

With domination of the Far East as their aim, Japan began an offensive against China that erupted into a full-blown war. The League of Nations criticised Japan, so the country simply left the League and continued its conquest. Although Japan occupied almost the entire coast of China, the Chinese government refused to surrender and the conflict continued. Japan, with its limited resources, was pushed to breaking point. The country needed resources. It was too late to make friends, but partnering with the enemies of its enemies was now a very appealing prospect.



# A deadly alliance



Hitler spared no expense to ensure he impressed Mussolini. When the Italian leader met the German dictator, Hitler put on an elaborate show of his nation's power with

a long parade of German troops and impressive demonstration of military equipment. It sent a strong message - this is the nation you want to fight with, not against. Italy agreed and Mussolini was impressed.

Two months later, in November 1936, Italy joined Germany and Japan in signing the Anti-Comintern Pact. Although appearing to aim at the communist international organisation Comintern, it was really directed towards the Soviet Union. By signing, the countries agreed if any of them should become involved in war with the Soviet Union, they would consult on measures "to safeguard their common interests". On the outside it painted Hitler and Mussolini as crusaders defending Western values against communism, but in reality the pact fuelled their expansionist goals. It was the first sign of what would become known as the Axis powers.

By May 1939, Germany and Italy knew war was inevitable, and the countries signed the Pact of Friendship, promising that two nations would supply aid to the other if they found themselves at war. However, it also contained secretive protocols preparing Italy and Germany for a future European war they would wage together. Japan originally intended to sign this so-called 'Pact of Steel', but as the focus was aimed at Britain and France, not the Soviet Union, they declined. The wartime alliance was now a very real, tangible thing.



A German general in an armoured car accompanying tanks in the invasion of Poland in 1939

But when Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, Italy wasn't ready - it needed years to train its army for war, so there was no way it could join in. In fact, Italy wasn't ready to declare war until June 1940, by which point Hitler had spread his forces across Western Europe. However, this was irrelevant to Japan and Italy, as, conveniently, all Axis powers wished to obtain territory in different areas of the world.

Although they fought for domination in different arenas, the three leaders knew the power of presenting a united front, so on 27 September 1940 the Tripartite Pact was signed. Its main aim was to keep the huge power of the US out of the war. By signing the pact the powers agreed to unite against anyone who opposed them, except for those already at war with them. It also established two spheres of influence, with Japan acknowledging Germany and Italy as the leaders of a new European order, and vice versa for Japan in East Asia.

The message was clear: the three powers were now an alliance that would eliminate anyone who stood in the way of the creation of their new empires. What had begun as three separate states with grand ambitions had transformed into a united, deadly and dangerous force, prepared to take on the mightiest nations on earth. The Axis was born.

## AXIS STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

### + Technology

German scientists and engineers were, at the beginning of the war, miles ahead of their Allied counterparts. They were already equipped with new technological advances like jets, synthetic oil, and the latest rockets and bombs. These German scientists were so impressive that after the war they were employed by the Allies under Operation Paperclip.

### + Numbers

The German army was already 3-million strong by 1936. Hitler had been preparing his forces for war years in advance, and it showed. For his 100 infantry and six armoured divisions in 1939, Great Britain had just ten of the former. Italy had one of the largest bomber forces in the world, while Japan boasted one of the largest navies.

### + Initiative

At the beginning of the war, the Axis felt the benefits of having the strategic initiative. While the Allies were still waiting to see how far Hitler would push his luck, the Führer had already made plans to invade Poland and eventually the USSR. Initially the Allies had no choice but to wait and react to what their enemies did, putting the Axis in a very powerful position indeed.

### - Lack of resources

The problem that fuelled the war for the Axis powers also plagued them throughout it: they were going bankrupt. As the war dragged on, they struggled to obtain enough resources for their forces. By the time the conflict had ended, Germany didn't even have enough oil to fuel its planes.

### - Sole command

Although this was initially an advantage, as Hitler was free to take whatever actions he saw fit, this came to be a major weakness as the war progressed. Hitler attempted to micromanage all his battles, when in reality this job should have been handled by his skilled and talented generals - as in the Allied countries.

### - Fractured alliance

The Axis aligned with each other essentially because their enemies were the same, and cracks gradually began to form. Italy was hesitant throughout the war due to its own lack of military strength. Hitler's early victories had inflated his ego and he was unwilling to compromise his goals. Japan was generally distrustful of any European power, ally or not. A true alliance was, ultimately, impossible.



Austrian Nazis look on as Jews are forced to scrub the pavement



## Mussolini + Hitler

On paper, the Führer and Il Duce should have got on well: Italian fascism and Nazism were very similar ideologies, and Hitler was a great admirer of Mussolini. In reality, their relationship was a tense one. Mussolini immediately disliked Hitler. He described *Mein Kampf* as boring and refused to use a translator when they first met. Mussolini spoke little German and could barely understand Hitler's accent, and after the meeting he described the dictator as "a silly little monkey." This scorn was not helped by the fact that Mussolini didn't agree with Hitler's extreme racial views. Despite their differences, they both realised that personal clashes were subservient to their political aims. Propaganda that displayed the two as friends was pumped out, and their alliance was one that was to alter the course of European history.



## Hitler + Hirohito

There is no record of Hitler and the emperor meeting in person, and this fact is symbolic of their entire relationship. It was a friendship of convenience and, had it continued, might have ended disastrously. Despite dubbing the Japanese as "honorary Aryans" to legitimise them as allies, in private Hitler was recorded as saying: "Let us think of ourselves as masters and consider these people at best as lacquered half-monkeys who need to feel the knout." The Japanese were no better as they considered themselves racially superior to Europeans. However, both saw the advantages of having the other as an ally, and despite their differing views, the two leaders were almost mirror images of the other. Had the Axis clinched victory, the ultimate outcome of this relationship would have likely been very grim indeed.

# Axis diplomacy

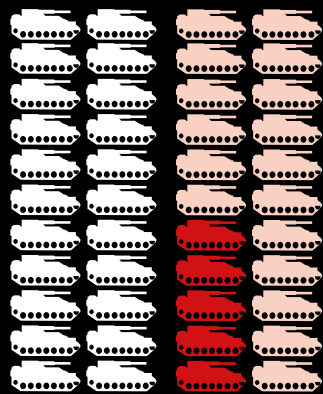
On the surface the Axis Powers were brothers united for a common cause, but just how close were these alliances behind closed doors?

## Mussolini + Hirohito

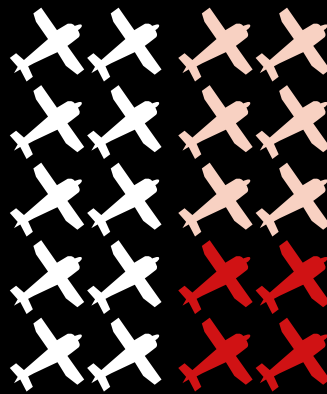
If there was little interaction between Hirohito and Hitler, there was even less between Hirohito and Mussolini. It's unlikely the two had much, if any, communication. However, Mussolini was convinced of Japanese support, even when Hitler was dubious. Mussolini was especially delighted by the attack on Pearl Harbor as he viewed the Americans as cowards for remaining neutral and approved that Japan forced their hand.



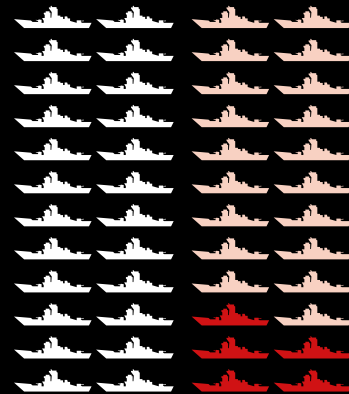
### TANKS



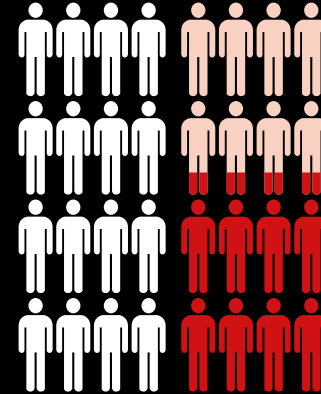
### WAR PLANES



### WARSHIPS



### TOTAL MANPOWER



■ ALLIED NATIONS ■ AXIS NATIONS



# A world alliance

States slowly joined the forces of evil, some willing, some with no choice



## 02 VICHY FRANCE

**Joined:** June 1940

**Willing?** No

After the fall of France, a Vichy government was set up that collaborated with the Axis. However, it never became a full military partner as Hitler prevented the military from building strength.

## 05 SLOVAKIA

**Joined:** 24 November 1940

**Willing?** Yes

Slovakia was a close ally of Germany and entered into a treaty of protection with the country in 1939. Slovak forces were part of the invasion of Poland and declared war on the Soviet Union.



## 03 ROMANIA

**Joined:** 23 November 1940

**Willing?** Yes

Although originally starting as a neutral country, pro-fascist elements grew in popularity after the fall of France and a coup led to a military dictatorship, which aligned the country with the Axis powers.



## 06 GREECE

**Joined:** April 1941

**Willing?** No

Greece was occupied by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany after being invaded, resulting in the death of tens of thousands of civilians to starvation.

## 10 SPAIN

**Joined:** 1941

**Willing?** Yes

Although Spain nominally remained neutral, it provided the Axis powers with military and economic assistance while supporting the idea of a fascist state in Europe.

## FORGING THE AXIS POWERS

**19 September 1931**

The Kwantung Army of Japan invades Manchuria. They will later create a puppet state named Manchukuo. Mussolini and Hitler watch closely as the League of Nations is powerless to stop the invasion.

**3 October 1935**

Italy invades Abyssinia (modern-day Ethiopia). The League of Nations condemns the move and votes to impose sanctions, but they prove to be largely ineffective.

**25 October 1936**

The Italian and German leaders sign a treaty that informally links the fascist countries, which will serve as the basis for the Rome-Berlin Axis.

**November 1937**

The Anti-Comintern pact is signed, extending the Rome-Berlin axis to Tokyo, and the three nations unite against the Soviet Union.

**12 March 1938**

The German Army marches into Austria amid cheers and celebration. The country is then annexed into the Third Reich. The Allies do nothing to stop it, despite verbally condemning German expansion.

**September 1938**

The Munich Agreement is signed, allowing Germany to annex parts of Czechoslovakia. Churchill says: "England has been offered a choice between war and shame. She has chosen shame, and will get war."

**1 September 1939**

Germany and the Soviet Union invade Poland. By 6 October, the country is divided between them.

**9 April 1940**

Germany invades Denmark and Norway in the early hours of the morning.

## 07 HUNGARY

**Joined:** 20 November 1940

**Willing?** Yes

Already a client state of Germany, Hungary agreed to join the Axis Powers in the hope that this would give it preferential economic treatment and help it to acquire the remainder of Transylvania in due course.



## 01 AUSTRIA

**Joined:** 12 March 1938

**Willing?** Yes

Hitler's native soil, Austria, was taken over by a Nazi government and German troops occupied the country. Austria became part of the Third Reich and no longer existed as an independent country.



## 08 FINLAND

**Joined:** 25 June 1941

**Willing?** No

Finland was never officially part of the Axis powers, but its Winter War against the Soviet Union made it Axis-aligned. When Britain bombed German forces in the Finnish port of Petsamo, relations were further severed.



## 11 IRAQ

**Joined:** May 1941

**Willing?** Yes

Iraq became a brief ally to the Axis during the Anglo-Iraqi War in 1941, where they fought the British. The prime minister, Rashid Ali, received support from Germany in his efforts to expel British forces from his country.



09

## 04 BULGARIA

**Joined:** 1 March 1941

**Willing?** Yes

Bulgaria was initially reluctant to get involved in the war, but was persuaded when Germany offered Greek territory in Thrace and also exempted them from the invasion of the Soviet Union.



## KEY

- ALLIED NATIONS
- AXIS NATIONS
- ALLIED OCCUPIED TERRITORY
- AXIS CONQUESTS
- NEUTRAL NATIONS
- VICHY TERRITORY

11

## 11 THAILAND

**Joined:** 25 January 1942

**Willing?** No

Thailand was officially a neutral country until it was invaded by Japan in 1941. The government then agreed to co-operate with the Japanese and allow them to use their country as a passage to invade Burma and Malaya.



**10 May 1940**

Germany invades the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. On the same day, British prime minister Neville Chamberlain resigns and is replaced by Winston Churchill.

**14 June 1940**

French and Allied forces retreat as German forces march into Paris with little resistance.

**6 April 1941**

The Battle of Greece begins as Germany invades the country. Greek troops find themselves outnumbered and the Axis occupies the country.

**22 June 1941**

Under the codename Operation Barbarossa, Germany invades the USSR. The invasion represents Hitler's ultimate goal: the elimination of the communist threat and acquisition of land for German expansion.

**8 December 1941 (local time)**

Malaya is invaded by Japan. The battle is fought between the British Indian Army and the Empire of Japan. It is the first major conflict of the Pacific War.

**7 December 1941 (local time)**

Japan unleashes a surprise attack against the US by bombing Pearl Harbor. The attack is planned to keep the US fleet from interfering in Japan's plans for expansion in Southeast Asia.

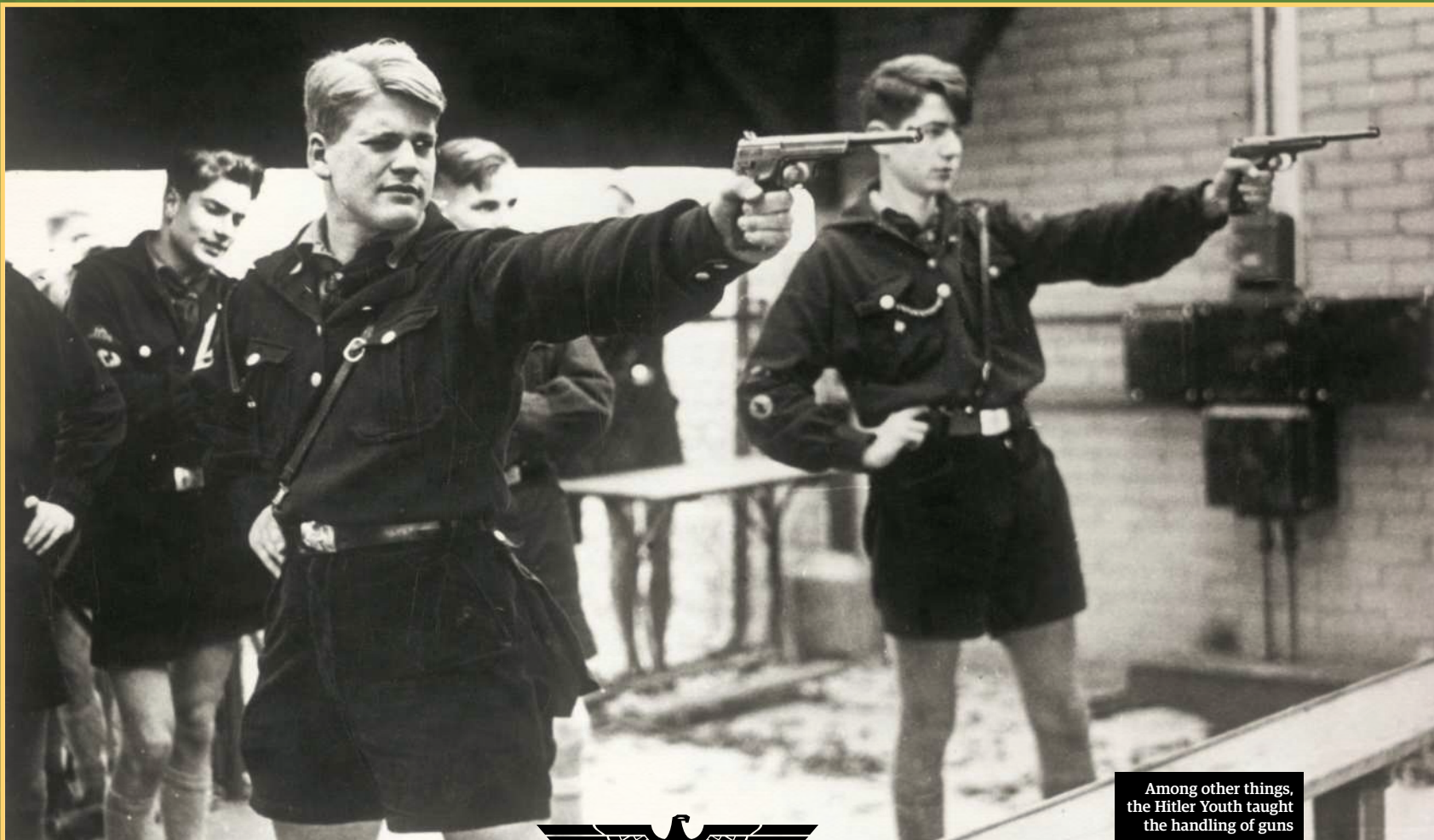
**8 December 1941**

Japan invades the Philippines just ten hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The province of Bataan is captured by April, and Japan will occupy the country for three years.

**28 June 1942**

Germany begins a summer offensive towards the Soviet city of Stalingrad. The offensive will eventually be defeated at the Battle of Stalingrad on 2 February 1943, turning the tide in the European theatre.





Among other things, the Hitler Youth taught the handling of guns



# Inside the Nazi State

Discover what life was like in Germany under Hitler's murderous rule



reporter from the *Daily Express*, D Sefton Delmar, hurries out into the night. It is late in the evening of 27 February 1933, and a fire is raging at the German parliament

building, the Reichstag. Delmar spots Hitler arriving at the scene. "This is a God-given signal," Hitler tells him as firefighters battle the inferno. "If this fire, as I believe, turns out to be the handiwork of communists, then there is nothing that shall stop us now crushing out this murder pest with an iron fist."

The sirens and alarms that blare through the Berlin night announce not only the raging fire, but also a new beginning for life in Germany. Hitler's plot to pin the fire on a terrorist attack instigated by communists - even though it is certainly believed today that the Nazis were behind the conflagration - paves the way for his party to finally take sole control of the German government.

The Reichstag Fire Decree is issued the following day, suspending a string of civil liberties, while the Enabling Act comes less

than a month later and sees the Reichstag voting itself into redundancy by permitting the chancellor to enact laws without the co-operation of parliament.

The Nazis are now in sole command and Hitler is set to become a dictator at last. The German people must prepare for life under Nazi rule, which will promote a glorious People's Community that is united under one party and one bountiful leader who has a predetermined, terrifying ideology that he will force upon his expanding nation.





Hitler Youth members on a camping trip

# Hitler Youth

The Nazis' bid to create a militarised nation saw the Hitler Youth emerge as a key organisation during the 1930s

Germany had long enjoyed a thriving youth movement, with dozens of clubs and societies active before 1933. The Hitler Youth was formed in 1926, but it was not initially a popular group; only once the Nazis came to power and either banned or synthesised existing collectives did it begin to blossom. There were fewer than 60,000 members when the Nazis claimed power, but almost 9 million in 1939 when membership became compulsory.

The aim of the movement was to breed a nation of soldiers. Entry began with induction into the cubs or 'Pimpfen' at the age of six, before boys of ten years then joined the German Youth or 'Deutsches Jungvolk' before finally graduating to the Hitler Youth, 'Hitler Jugend', at 14, where they remained until they could join the military. The Hitler Youth learned the motto: "Live faithfully, fight bravely and die laughing."

Many boys liked the camaraderie the movement engendered and plenty of those from less privileged backgrounds loved the games, summer camps, camping trips and ceremonies that bonded the members together. Indeed, many children joined up against their parents' wishes. As the boys got

older, however, some of them found their enthusiasm waning, especially during the war years when the emphasis was on strict discipline and military training.

While the boys trained for lives as warriors of the state, girls too were encouraged into a society, the League of German Girls, which promoted a robust view of Germanic motherhood to those over ten years old. They learned the motto, "Be faithful, be pure, be German." Again, enthusiasm waned once membership became obligatory in 1939.



## DAILY ACTIVITIES FOR THE HITLER YOUTH

### 1 Shooting

Shooting was a compulsory activity for all members aged ten or over. Rifle ownership wasn't common in 1930s Germany, and shooting proved to be a perennially popular activity among the boys.

### 2 Sports

Physical education was a vital component of the Hitler Youth movement, though the mandatory calisthenics were often unpopular. Competitive sports, especially athletics and boxing, were also strongly encouraged.

### 3 Education

While core education was left to the school curriculum, the Nazis used the Youth movement to propagate its exclusionist policies, teaching racism against Jews and other 'outsiders'. Some older members of the Hitler Youth joined the SA stormtroopers in racist attacks.

### 4 Military training

Engendering discipline and respect for authority was integral to the Hitler Youth's bid to mould future warriors and plenty of time was spent lined up in formation. Direct military training included parade-ground drills, Morse code, trench digging and the like.

### 5 Camping

Another popular activity with young boys and girls, camping sprang into life during the spring and summer months. German youth movements already had a long tradition of camping over Whitsun, the seventh Sunday after Easter.

### 6 Hiking

Often going hand in hand with camping, hiking was of particular importance as it built physical stamina, discipline and camaraderie among the members, as well as propagating practical skills like map reading. Hiking was often encouraged on Sundays to distract boys from church activities.

### 7 Ceremonies

Children appreciate parades, pomp and pageantry, and the ceremonial side of Nazi life sought to build a sense of purpose and community among its youth. The Hitler Youth's drum and bugle corps played a prominent role in Nazi social activity.

### 8 Music and singing

A key area for those boys who did not excel at sports, music and singing were integral to the Hitler Youth, with its penchant for pageantry. Reich youth leader Baldur von Schirach believed that "songs possess the strongest community-building power".



# Women

Under the Nazi regime, a woman's place was most definitely in the home

The Nazi Party played up stereotypes to a terrifying degree as it promoted the superiority of 'pure Aryans', male and female. The men were to be great warriors, happily surrendering their lives for the Führer and the Fatherland. Women, meanwhile, were to be strong homemakers and willing mothers. They, like the men, were to be physically robust. They would have strong hips and wear neither heels nor make-up. They would not smoke in public. Propriety was their watchword.

"The slogan 'Emancipation of women' was invented by Jewish intellectuals", said Hitler at the 1934 Nuremberg Rally. "For her [the woman] the world is her husband, her family, her children and her home." The Führer's view stood in stark contrast to the liberalism of the Weimar Republic, which had granted women the right to vote while also making concessions towards equal pay and professional advancement.

According to Hitler, the Weimar Republic had got it all wrong. When coming to power, the Nazis dismissed women from senior positions in the civil service and within three years they had banned females from the legal profession as well. Under Nazi ideology, the woman's place was definitely in the home.

Hitler wanted a high birth rate, and good morals, and therefore launched a key policy, the Law for the Encouragement of Marriage, which from 1933 loaned newly wed couples 1,000 marks via the granting of vouchers for household goods. The woman was required to surrender her job, though one-quarter of the loan was written off with each child produced. A rising population would boost the long-term plans for German expansion. Women without husbands,

meanwhile, could volunteer to carry a child for true Aryan members of the SS. Marriages between 'pure' Germans and outsiders were forbidden.

"The mission of women is to be beautiful and to bring children into the world," said Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels in 1929. "The female bird pretties herself for her mate and hatches eggs for him. In exchange, the male takes care of gathering food, and stands guard and wards off the enemy."

Upon coming to power, the Nazi Party launched a clutch of organisations to promote its worldview among women, including the prominent German Women's League, formed in



1933 to oversee all-female societies. By the time war broke out in 1939, it boasted more than 6 million members.

The pressures of feeding a war machine eventually saw the Nazis modify their policy towards women and from 1939 onward they encouraged women back to work, though female labourers remained employed, primarily in agriculture and industry.



## CROSS OF HONOUR OF THE GERMAN MOTHER

Referred to as the Mother's Cross, this government-conferred award was introduced in 1939 and was designed to encourage scrupulousness, fine moral rectitude and prolific childbearing feats among German women. The honours were awarded on 12 August, the birthday of Hitler's mother, and the cross came in three categories.



**3RD CLASS ORDER  
BRONZE CROSS**  
For mothers with four to five children



**2ND CLASS ORDER  
SILVER CROSS**  
For mothers with six to seven children



**1ST CLASS ORDER  
GOLD CROSS**  
For mothers with eight or more children





# Propaganda

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler emphasised the vital role propaganda would play in his bid to create a new Germany

According to the Führer's top PR man, Joseph Goebbels, propaganda was the most modern of tools and the Nazis' "sharpest weapon in conquering the state". Hitler formed the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda once he came to power, employing art, radio, film, printed media, architecture, theatre and music to promote the Nazi ideology of Aryan superiority, a people's community, and a national socialism defined by extreme polarisation of racial stereotypes, good and bad.

The Nazis sought to inspire a military spirit and war-readiness among the populace, and also to promote the 'Hitler myth', which cast the Führer as the people's chancellor, sworn to deliver a repressed Germany from the shackles imposed by the world superpowers after World War I.

Once at war, from 1939, Nazi propaganda tactics shifted focus in a bid to maintain public morale and to mobilise the people's efforts to war. This became increasingly difficult after the catastrophic defeat at Stalingrad in 1943. During the regime's final years, Hitler and Goebbels focused on the perils of Bolshevism and the Red Threat from the East as well as promoting an ever-increasing anti-Semitism. The Nazis also used propaganda to demand a greater resolve from the people as the war dragged on.

For all its efficacy, however, the propaganda machine could not hold back the tide of war, and though active until the end of the conflict, it eventually crumbled with all the other mechanisms of the Nazi state.



## Hitler myth "One people, one empire, one leader"

1938

As the Nazis geared up for war, they sought to unite the public behind one strong dictator and war leader. Goebbels considered the 'Hitler myth' his greatest-ever PR coup.



## Strong German morale

"One struggle, one victory"

1943

When the tide began to turn against Hitler's armies after Stalingrad, he tried to maintain public resolve with this campaign celebrating ten years of Nazi rule.



## Anti-Semitism "Behind the enemy: the Jews"

1945

The Nazis stepped up their anti-Semitic efforts as the defeats mounted, hoping to boost German solidarity by claiming Germany was the victim of an international Jewish-led conspiracy.



# Art & culture

The Nazi regime was well disposed toward cultural activity - as long as it served the state, of course

The cultural liberality enjoyed under the Weimar Republic was reviled by the Nazis, who regarded artistic expression as devoid of moral fortitude. To the Nazis, modernist endeavours were synonymous with Jewry, and they dismissed any form of abstract art - like Expressionism or Cubism - or atonal music. Jazz was despised, given its link with African-Americans. Feminism, too, was the work of the non-Aryans, they said.

The Propaganda Ministry formed the Reich Music Chamber, which celebrated composer Richard Strauss headed up before his removal

in 1935, to promote music by Germany's great classical masters, such as Beethoven and Brahms. Hitler was said to be a fan of Richard Wagner's operas, which celebrated Teutonic myths and culture. The nation, however, preferred common songs and more popular music, so the Third Reich struggled to regiment its populace's listening culture.

The Nazis did enjoy great success, however, with their control of cinema, which Goebbels recognised as a vital tool in his propaganda mission, establishing a Reich film chamber in 1933. During the year Hitler came to power,

64 Hollywood films screened in Germany. By 1940 that number had fallen to just five. Disney cartoons remained popular, but the vast majority of features financed by the regime contained some form of political message. Among the most famous - and recognised as ahead of their time by modern film historians - were the works of Leni Riefenstahl, such as *The Triumph of the Will*, a documentary on the 1934 Nuremberg Rally, and *Olympia*, about the Olympic Games held in Berlin two years later.

# Religion

Though Hitler never officially renounced his faith, by 1939 the Nazis had effectively severed their link with the Church

Religion was a perplexing problem for the Nazis. Almost 60 per cent of the German population was Protestant, primarily organised under the German Evangelical Church, which from 1933 the Nazis sought to bring under the auspices of a centralised Reich Church.

However, many pastors resisted the move, with a group of around 5,000 dissidents forming the Confessional Church, which opposed Nazi interference in religious affairs. The Roman Catholic Church, meanwhile, proved even more confounding as its members (around 30 per cent of the population) looked outside Germany, to Rome, for spiritual leadership.

To begin with, Hitler worked with the Catholics, forging a concordat with the Vatican where the papacy recognised Nazi power while

the new regime agreed to leave the Catholic Church to its own devices inside Germany. However, the Nazis remained hostile to the Catholics and murdered a number of leading religious figures, such as Fritz Gerlich, on 1934's infamous Night of the Long Knives.

Relations had broken down by 1937, when Pope Pius XI decided the Catholic Church could no longer remain silent in the face of mounting Nazi suppression and he wrote to his bishops, attacking the Nazi attitude toward Catholicism. Not surprisingly, the Nazis did not take the move well and by 1939 a series of aggressive measures had considerably diminished the Catholic Church's influence in Germany. The Church never provided any effective resistance to the Third Reich.



Ludwig Müller being installed as Reich Bishop of Germany in 1933



# Economy

The impending confrontation with the world's largest superpowers required an economic transformation

In German homes in February 1933, families gathered around the radio to hear Hitler talk of his assault on unemployment. The economic depression that hit in 1929 and 1930 had a devastating effect on a German economy only recently recovered from the aftermath of World War I. By 1932, one in three workers was out of work. Hitler would save the German worker, agricultural or industrial. "Within four years", he declared, "unemployment must be overcome."

The Nazis succeeded in creating jobs, though much of their success was built on policies introduced by the previous regime, and the figures were skewed by influencing factors such as the Nazis' bid to take women out of work, thereby creating jobs for the male labour force. They also reintroduced conscription in 1935, which again provided employment for young men, while their attack on undesirables removed them from the state's economic figures.

The head of the Reichsbank, Hjalmar Schacht, oversaw an economic recovery between 1933 and 1936, as the Nazis embarked on a huge public-works programme, granting tax concessions for businesses to take on more staff, and taking their first steps towards military rearmament.

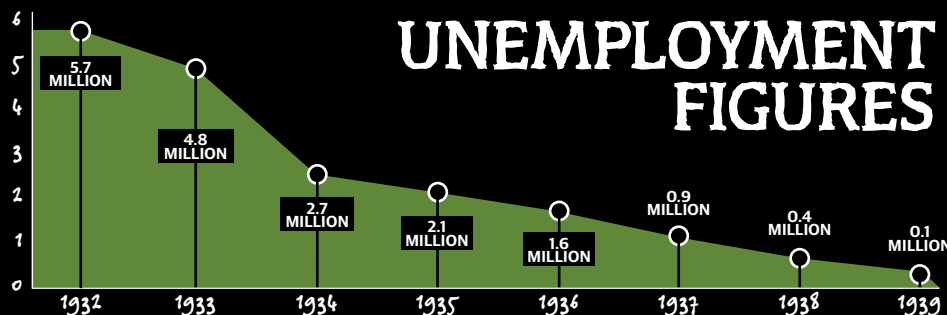
The Nazis also replaced the trade unions of the Weimar Republic with the German Labour Front ('Deutsches Arbeitsfront'), which became the largest organisation in the country, focusing its efforts on worker morale, encouraging people to sign up to Hitler's 'People's Community' ideal.

From 1936, Hermann Göring, the man charged with rebuilding the Luftwaffe, took control of economic matters and helped execute the aggressive Four Year Plan, which strove to make Germany war-ready by 1940. Rearmament accelerated. In 1939, German military spending stood at 25 per cent of its national income, compared to 16 per cent in Britain and just one per cent in the US.

Under the Four Year Plan, Göring aimed to make Germany self-sufficient and the Nazi propaganda machine went into overdrive, encouraging the people to remain patriotic in their purchasing, always buying German. Hiking and package holidays became national pleasures, with propaganda falsely playing up a rise in living standards. Unemployment fell during the 1930s, but the aggressive rearmament policy led to shortages of key commodities and longer working hours for many. The consumption of higher quality foods - meat, bacon, milk, eggs, fish vegetables, sugar, tropical fruit and beer - also diminished.

Production of military machinery was stepped up dramatically in the 1930s

## UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES



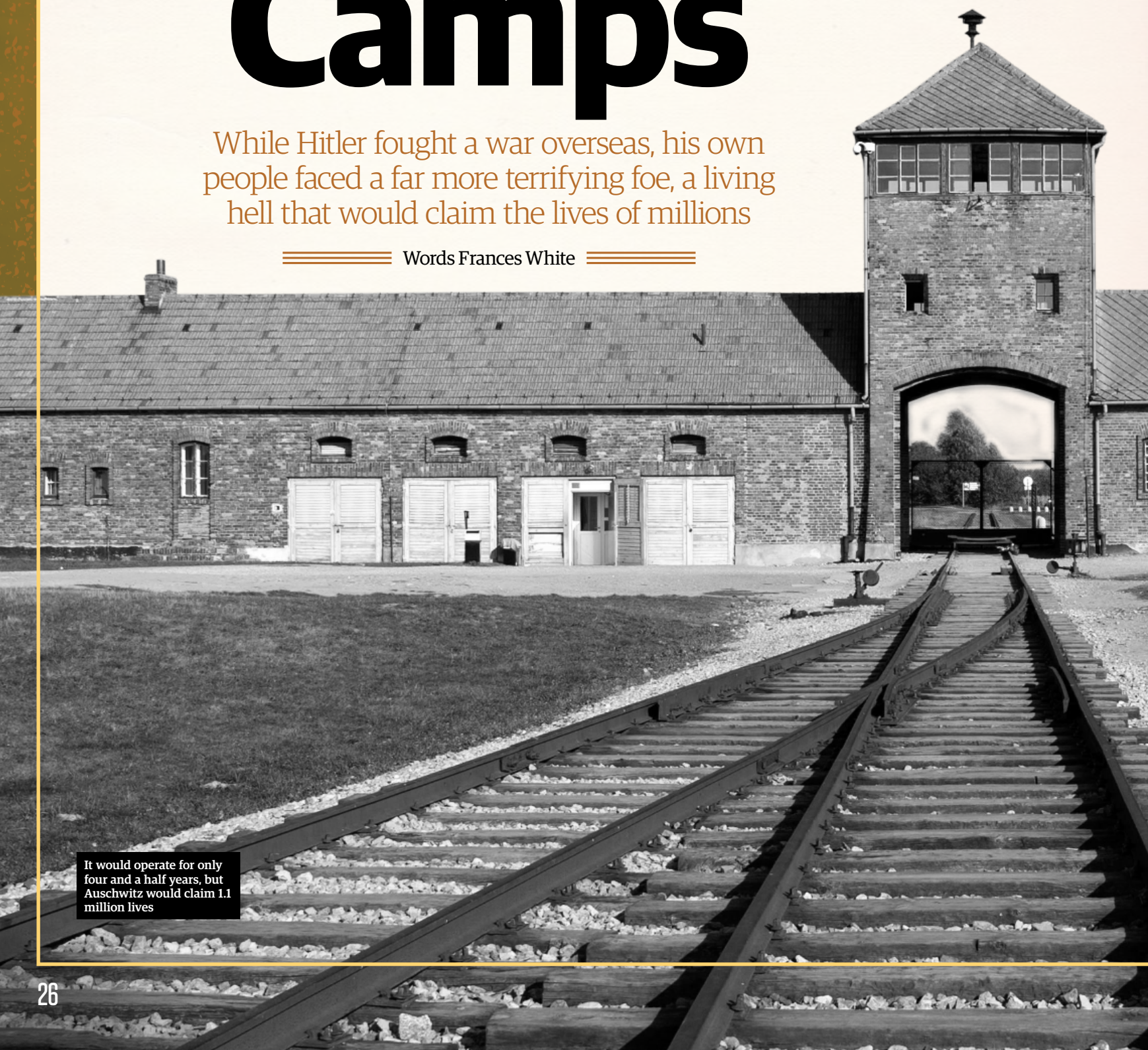




# Hitler's Death Camps

While Hitler fought a war overseas, his own people faced a far more terrifying foe, a living hell that would claim the lives of millions

Words Frances White



It would operate for only four and a half years, but Auschwitz would claim 1.1 million lives





Since 1945, more than 44 million people from the furthest reaches of the planet have visited Auschwitz. A sombre, silent world of barbed wire,

railway sidings, cold barracks and a dirty, rusted crematorium, Auschwitz today stands as a well-preserved memory of everything that occurred there. It is an uncomfortable memory, one the majority would like to forget, yet is vital that all remember. At the time, Auschwitz was only one of many, but today it serves as a symbol of extermination, a warning of the darkest reaches of evil, and a reminder to, at all costs, avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

Concentration camps, or variations of them, were a constant part of Hitler's rule; the very first ones were created as soon as he was appointed chancellor of Germany in 1933. These detainment camps were intended for political opponents of the Nazi Party - by ridding himself of anyone he believed to be a threat by throwing them in these camps, Hitler was able to consolidate power and rule largely unopposed.

Due to the growing number of people arrested, more camps were needed and were built throughout Germany. By 1934, the camps were controlled by one central administration, and by the end of that year the SS were the

only agency with the authority to run them. By the time Germany invaded Poland in 1939, there were six camps. Although they involved imprisonment and forced labour, they did not yet carry out the brutal task for which they would one day become infamous: mass murder.

Hitler's plan to eliminate the Jewish population, did not occur overnight; instead the process of dehumanisation began very early in his rule. He introduced the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, which made it illegal for Germans to marry or have sex with Jews. The laws also took away the Jews' German citizenship, and most of their rights. Propaganda films were pumped out to convince the population of their immortality, and how the Jews' genetic makeup defined them as parasites.

In 1938, the 'Night of Broken Glass' saw Nazis looting and burning synagogues, hospitals, schools, homes and Jewish businesses all over Germany. Jews were expelled from their homes and forced into ghettos. By this stage most regarded them as subhuman, and the Jews were terrified into submission by the brutality they had experienced. Afraid, alone and with no rights, it was the perfect storm for Hitler to execute his Final Solution.

The camps specifically designed for extermination were built after the Wannsee

## NAZI EXPERIMENTS

Another horrific aspect of the death camps was human experimentation. Many doctors and physicians were drawn by the chance to conduct twisted experiments that would not usually be permitted, and the fate of many of their patients was worse than death.

Some of the experiments involved exposing the body to extreme conditions like freezing temperatures or atmospheric pressure, just to see how they would react. Healthy inmates were infected with diseases such as malaria or tuberculosis to test immunisation methods. Another experiment concerned blood clotting, where the subjects were given a substance to see how it would affect them, then were shot through the chest or neck, or even had their limbs amputated without anaesthesia.

Other experiments seemed to only satisfy the doctors' sick desires. Josef Mengele, for example, was fascinated with twins and he would conduct horrific acts upon them, such as sewing four-year-old twins together in order to make them conjoined. Their suffering was only ended by their parents managing to sneak them morphine to kill them.

Known as the 'Angel of Death', Mengele would trick children into trusting him by giving them sweets and toys before maiming, paralysing and murdering them. In one particularly horrific experiment, nursing babies were taken from their mothers to see how long they could survive without feeding. As far as the doctors were concerned, the concentration camps not only gave them free rein to conduct their experiments, but also provided a constant, ample supply of subjects who couldn't say no.



These Jewish twins were some of the few children to survive Auschwitz, as they were kept alive for Mengele's experiments

**"Afraid, alone and with no rights, it was the perfect storm for Hitler to execute his Final Solution"**



Conference in early 1942, where the goal of exterminating all Jews was decided upon, and was given the name Operation Reinhard. Responsibility for executing this fell to Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi lieutenant colonel who had arranged the movement of Jews into ghettos. Three centres designed primarily for killing were established in Poland: Belzec, Sobibór and Treblinka. Auschwitz II was also designed as an extermination camp.

Auschwitz was by far the biggest and most organised of the camps. It comprised three separate camps: a death camp, Birkenau; a forced labour camp; and a concentration camp. Covering over 30.5 square kilometres, it was guarded by approximately 6,000 men and would go on to claim more than 1.25 million lives.

The huge killing centre at Birkenau was the largest in the Nazi system, and served as the centrepiece of the extermination. There were several pure death camps that were, by comparison, quite small at only a few hundred metres long, and designed for quick and 'efficient' killing. Treblinka, for example, was located in sparsely populated woodland, the perfect place for concealing murders.

The first trains carrying prisoners arrived in Birkenau in March 1942. However, the trauma began long before the prisoners arrived. The journey consisted of the men, women and children being forced to travel in cramped, windowless cattle wagons, some so packed there was only room to stand. There was no water, food, toilet facilities or even ventilation.

Perhaps worst of all was the lack of control - the prisoners had no idea where they were going, or how long the traumatic journey would last. Many people died of starvation or suffocation before they even reached the camp, and those still alive were forced to share their wagons with rotting corpses. The longest journey lasted a horrific 18 days, and when the doors were opened, the SS discovered piles of lifeless bodies.

Those who arrived at the death camps were told it was a holding facility and they would continue their journey soon. In fact, the only prisoners that survived these camps were the 'lucky' few able-bodied selected to remove and bury the corpses killed in the gas chambers.

At all camps, the people were forced to leave their belongings and were gathered outside for a selection process. First, they were divided by gender and then an SS guard would assess their fitness. Small children, pregnant women, the sick and handicapped were the first to be condemned to death. The Nazis had little use for them, as they couldn't work.

Most women with small children were also given a death sentence, as separating them would have caused a commotion, and above anything the camp runners wished to maintain the order and efficiency of their operation. Those who were over 14 and were deemed 'fit' for work were sent to the other side of the loading ramp, almost always splitting up families who had no idea that they would never be able to see their loved ones again.

The Nazis were very concerned with achieving the most efficient killing process. They

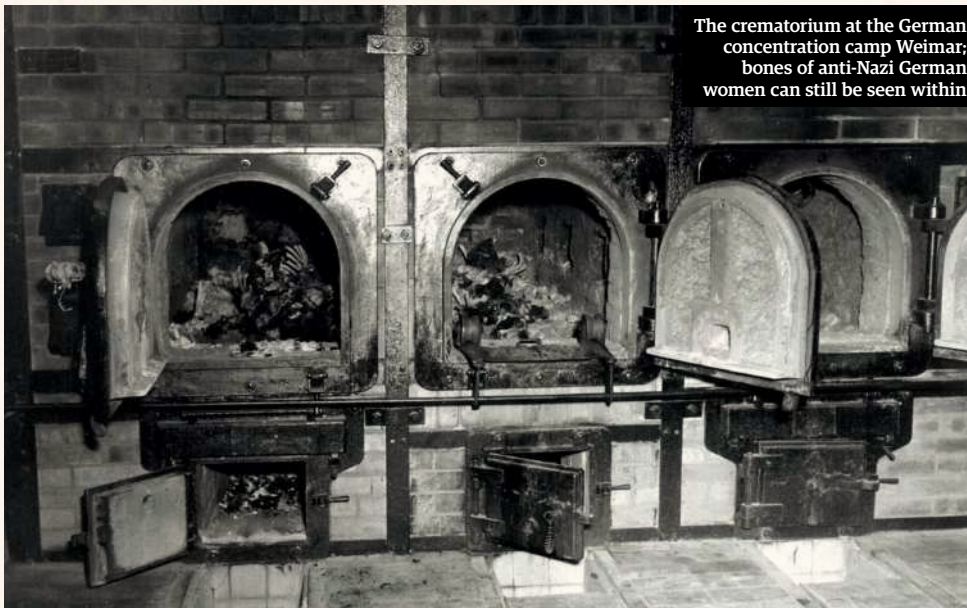


Jewish women in Budapest captured and escorted away. One-tenth of the Jewish victims were Hungarian



Cargo trains were used to transport victims to the death camps. Many didn't survive the journey





The crematorium at the German concentration camp Weimar; bones of anti-Nazi German women can still be seen within



Jews were required to identify themselves by wearing a yellow star in public, this was part of the process of dehumanisation



If a person was sent to the right in the selection, they would live as a labourer - the left was a death sentence, though the victim did not know it

**"Grim, prolonged suffering awaited. The fit inmates would be completely undressed, then shaved of their body hair and tattooed with the now-infamous registration numbers"**

had conducted multiple experiments and lots of research into determining the most effective way of dispatching their victims; one that would ensure everyone died, that no one escaped, and that no one would realise what was happening until it was too late. The method they eventually settled on in most of the camps was gassing. While carbon monoxide was originally used, the insecticide Zyklon B was developed and found to be more effective.

To maintain the façade of safety, the victims were told to undress to be 'washed and disinfected', and often Jewish prisoners were used as part of this process, helping their kinsmen to undress to calm their nerves. Any children that cried were comforted by a 'Special Detachment' team of Jewish people, and there were many reports of children walking into the chambers laughing and singing as they clutched their toys. Notices such as 'Cleanliness brings freedom!' were hung above the chamber doors, and SS men dressed as doctors even examined

the victims before the gassing. However, this was only to mark the prisoners who had gold teeth which they could later extract.

The doors were sealed and the gas would enter the chamber via pellets of Zyklon B that were dropped into vents. The toxic gas would slowly rise from the bottom up, filling the space. As the victims struggled to breathe they would trample and fight to reach the ceiling, and often when the doors were open, the bodies would be found piled atop each other, with the strongest at the top. It was far from a peaceful execution, and many witnesses reported being able to hear the victims screaming and pleading for their lives. They were found with blood seeping from their ears and foam from their mouths.

One of the biggest problems the Nazis faced with their mass killings was corpse disposal. Initially the bodies were buried in mass graves, but due to the sheer number this became inefficient, so instead they were cremated. The corpses were loaded into fiery pits, which were

also operated by prisoners from the Special Detachment team. These men would stoke the fire, turn the corpses and drain the excess fat that seeped out, well aware that they, too, would one day meet the same fate.

Because the killing at Auschwitz was on a much larger scale, crematoria were created, and the ashes were buried in the ground or dumped in the river. Although the SS members wished to maintain a façade of relative safety, even they were unable to mask the putrid smell of burning human flesh that rose from the crematoria.

For those lucky enough to escape instant extermination, grim, prolonged suffering awaited. The fit inmates would be undressed, then shaved and tattooed with the now-infamous registration numbers. They would then be disinfected and scalded or frozen with boiling or freezing showers before being dressed in striped pyjamas and a pair of uncomfortable wooden clogs, rarely in their actual size, their individuality and freedom stripped away.



Although Auschwitz-Birkenau in particular masqueraded as a work camp, with slogans such as 'Arbeit macht frei', or 'Work sets you free', emblazoned on archways, the Nazi concentration camps never intended to release the vast majority of their victims. The intent instead was death through labour, exhaustion, starvation and disease. Those who were spared the gas chambers when they arrived had not been given a new chance of life, but a slower death.

The Nazis did everything to ensure that these deaths would come. They created wooden or brick barracks, intended to house 40 prisoners, but often more than 700 would be cramped within. There were not proper beds, but straw-filled mattresses spread over wooden bunks, earth floors and next to no sanitary facilities. Although the barracks did have stoves, there was no fuel provided. They were dirty, cramped and freezing, a breeding ground for disease. The winters were especially brutal, and many prisoners died shivering in the plummeting Polish temperatures.

Beyond the barracks themselves, the sanitary facilities for prisoners were not only poor, but dangerous. Initially there was no water at all for the inmates to wash themselves or keep clean. When water was finally introduced, it was filthy and riddled with disease. The inmates had no choice but to use it; despite how dirty and stinking it was, washing daily gave them some remnant of a life that was real, and some

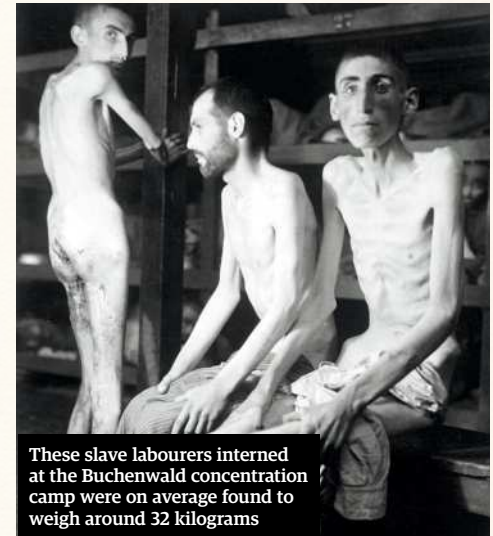
memory of civilisation - if that was lost, their enemies would have won.

There was certainly no memory of civilisation in the brutal daily routines the prisoners were forced to go through; in fact they were designed to beat every sense of worth and purpose out of them, until all that remained was a husk of what was once a person.

Prisoners were awoken at dawn, after having very little sleep. They were forced to stand still in their thin, ragged clothing through all weathers for hours on end as they were counted. Anyone too weak to stand would be taken away to be executed. Roll call was repeated in the evening, and was often a chance for the officers to punish prisoners who had not worked hard enough, were resisting or showing weakness. They were used to demonstrate to the others what would happen if they stepped out of line, the punishment always brutal and violent, and more often than not ended in death. It was a daily reminder of how expendable each and every one of them was.

Work within the camp varied depending on the person, but the most desirable placement was within the SS offices themselves, with the filing or administration roles usually filled by women with some sort of education. However, due to their lack of protection and rights, this often resulted in sexual exploitation and rape. Most were forced into physical labour, backbreaking factory work, construction projects, or on farms or in coal mines.

A lot of the tasks the inmates were given were pointless and humiliating, and they were very rarely provided the proper equipment. For example, Ben Stern, a camp survivor, spoke of a job he was given to carry steel beams in the freezing winter. 20 men were lifting each side of the massive beam, and they were told to place it somewhere. However, when they tried to they were unable as their skin was frozen to the metal. The skin was torn from their hands and began bleeding. The next day they were forced to carry the same beam back to the original spot. It was this kind of repetitive, pointless labour that was designed to break spirits and erase all sense of self-worth or strength to fight back.



These slave labourers interned at the Buchenwald concentration camp were on average found to weigh around 32 kilograms

## GETTING REVENGE

The suffering of those who managed to survive the death camps didn't end when they were liberated, and some didn't desire a quiet, peaceful life. They lusted after one thing only: revenge.

Calling themselves the Nakam, and also known as 'The Avengers', a group of approximately 60 Jews, many of whom were Holocaust survivors, grouped together and arrived in Germany to hunt their chosen prey - Nazis. While many of the prominent leaders of the camps had been punished, many Nazis involved in the running of the camps were allowed to wander freely and continue their lives, and the Avengers did not like this.

The group would first identify Nazis, then stage an arrest under the guise of military police, and take the offender away. Then the Jews would enact their revenge, some of their targets would be strangled,

others hanged, in order to mask the murder as a suicide. Nazis were also found in ditches, the supposed victims of hit and runs, or car accidents that occurred due to freak mechanical failures.

One huge operation involved a member obtaining a job as a baker at a detention centre for former SS members where he poisoned over 3,000 loaves, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of men. However, this bread poisoning was only plan B to the original

mass murder scheme of poisoning the water supplies of five German cities. The intention was to kill 6 million Germans - a German life for every Jewish life. Luckily, the plan was foiled when one of the members, loaded with canisters of poison, was discovered by British police. Because the Avengers were so discreet, we have no idea how many Nazis met their end through the group, but their message was clear: we have not forgiven or forgotten.



The Avengers were formed by Abba Kovner, a Lithuanian Jew who, during the war, released a manifesto with the famous phrase "Let us not go like lambs to the slaughter!"

**"We have no idea how many Nazis they killed, but their message was clear: we have not forgiven or forgotten"**





Jews who sought asylum elsewhere were often denied, the refugees on MS St. Louis were turned away from Cuba, Canada and the US

The exhaustion brought on by the relentless labour was not helped by the inadequate food. The meals were never substantial, and never provided enough calories for the physical exertion their bodies were under. Breakfast usually consisted of imitation coffee and lunch was soup, but it was watery with nothing in it to eat - sometimes it was just water warmed up in a metal tin. A thin slice of bread with a tiny slice of sausage or margarine was given in the evening to last until the morning.

The lack of food was so prevalent and debilitating that many prisoners starved to death, losing pounds of muscle mass and tissue until they resembled nothing more than living skeletons. Those who were quick enough would steal the bread or boots off dead bodies, then use them to trade for something that might aid their own survival, like a place to sleep, or a chance to wash themselves.

All of this exhaustion, pain and hunger combined with the random cullings and the constant spectre of the crematoria towers pumping out smoke had the exact effect the Nazis desired, and people died in their hundreds of thousands. Many were the victims of starvation and disease, but there were many, enough to earn a nickname, who completely gave up hope. Muselmann (a slang term based on the German word for 'Muslim') were victims who would squat with their legs tucked in,

their shoulders curved and their heads down, completely and utterly overcome with despair, and they had given up all hope of survival. Holocaust survivor Primo Levi wrote that if he could "enclose all the evil of our time in one image, I would choose this image".

However, not everyone surrendered all hope. There were many who resisted, whether it was simply by continuing to practise their faith or even writing diaries and secretly hiding them to tell of the horrors that happened within. There were also incidents of physical resistance: one woman seized a gun from an SS officer and shot two of them while undressing in the crematorium. Another group of Polish prisoners escaped while building a drainage ditch. One of the most remarkable acts of rebellion was when 250 Special Detachment Jews set fire to a crematorium, cut through the fence and reached the outside. Though they were all killed, they took three guards down with them and the crematorium was never used again.

Between May 1940 and January 1945, 1.3 million prisoners were transported to Auschwitz; of these, 90 per cent were killed on arrival. The Allies and those in the free world had received information about the Holocaust, but the whole horrific picture of what was truly occurring didn't become clear until they were liberated.

In late 1944, with the approaching Red Army, Hitler planned to conceal all that had occurred

within the camps. The gassings stopped, documents were destroyed, and buildings were burned down or dismantled. Those healthy enough to walk - approximately 58,000 people - were ordered to evacuate by foot to Loslau, some 63 kilometres away. The exhausted men and women were forced to walk through freezing conditions, many without shoes, and any who fell or were too slow were shot. Some 15,000 prisoners died on this horrific death march.

When the Soviet forces stumbled upon Auschwitz, they were greeted by a few thousand sick and ailing prisoners, as well as hundreds of thousands of pieces of clothing, toothbrushes, glasses and seven tonnes of human hair. Army medics hurried to save the survivors, and two military field hospitals were set up; recovery, however, would not come as quick.

Those who survived searched for any living relatives and a place to rebuild their lives. Displaced and alone, many refugees ended up living in temporary Displaced Persons camps before emigrating to other countries in the hope of starting a new life. However, a new life - after the things that they had witnessed and experienced - did not come easy. Even when the inmates were free from the barbed wire, from the rising smoke and the SS guards, the trauma of the death camps would continue to hold them prisoner, and it would haunt their lives until the end.





# Blitzkrieg

## Hitler's Lightning War

There are few instances in modern warfare where two equally matched powers fought such a one-sided contest. The Battle for France was over in weeks

==== Words Will Lawrence ====



he blitzkrieg, or 'lightning war', is a German term that was coined by Western media to characterise the rapidity and proficiency of Germany's invasion of Poland

in September 1939. That conflict, which pitted the burgeoning military prowess of a resurgent Germany against the numerically deficient and under-gunned Polish, was no contest. Hitler, however, hoped that this show of German strength might persuade Britain and France to recognise his occupation.

They did not, and by early October he had already promulgated Fall Gelb, or 'Case Yellow', an attack on the west that would push through Luxembourg, Belgium and Holland, damaging the armies of the French and her allies while establishing a base for an assault by air and sea on Britain, before pushing for the conquest of France.

At this stage, while Hitler had a firm idea of what he had hoped Case Yellow could achieve, he did not have a clear concept for its technical specificity. Like the previous heads of state in Germany, and in Prussia beforehand, Hitler delegated the intricacies to his military chiefs, a decision that invited procrastination and delay, with the man initially charged with the plan's formulation, General Halder, failing to acquiesce to Hitler's various demands for a quick and decisive victory.

With Hitler at this stage enjoying only limited support among the military high command, the

plan of attack underwent a number of revisions, the generals (quite rightly) insisting that autumn and then winter were not the seasons for a full-scale invasion. It was down to one of Hitler's few allies to jog his plan forward.

This was General von Manstein, the chief of staff for Army Group A, whose idea was to stake everything on a surprise attack by a heavily mechanised force through the Ardennes, hammering against the weakest section of the French defence, north of the sprawling fortresses of the Maginot Line. This would be a second blitzkrieg, offering an even greater prize than that unleashed against the Poles.

The penetrative striking role was to fall on Army Group A, comprising seven of the ten available German panzer divisions. They would push through to the River Meuse and then either sweep south of the Maginot, or along the Somme valley towards the Channel coast. Army Group B, meanwhile, comprising three panzer divisions, was to draw the Allied forces into Belgium and hold them there so that they could not move against Army Group A's unprotected right flank. Army Group C, with no panzer divisions, would engage the garrisons defending the Maginot so that they could not move against A's left flank.

The attack opened on 10 May and it began with a Luftwaffe assault. Around 500 twin-engined bombers took to the skies in the early morning, bound for 72 designated airfields in France, Belgium and Holland. Before first light,





German troops moved through the forests of the Ardennes, catching the Allies by surprise

Image Alamy





paratroopers were dropping into positions close to the Hague and Leyden. One of the most daring assaults came against the Belgian fortress of Eben-Emael, where troops used the element of surprise to land gliders on the roof, pinning the defenders inside and using concrete-piercing explosives to force entry.

The element of surprise was key and nowhere was it better employed than against the Netherlands, a neutral country. Its tiny army had not fought a war for more than 100 years; across the centuries, the Lowlanders' best form of defence had been to retreat among the complex network of canals surrounding Amsterdam and from there engaging in a guerrilla-type war, but this strategy faltered in the modern age as Luftwaffe bombs tumbled from the skies. When the paratroopers of 22nd Airborne Division landed deep in the heart of Holland to await the arrival of Army Group B, the game was up. By 15 May, the Dutch government had capitulated.

Belgium fared little better. While it too had hoped to remain neutral and therefore would not allow Anglo-French forces to take up positions within its territory, though it had passed on details of an early incarnation of Yellow, which fell into Belgian hands during January of 1940.

The attack unfolded as Hitler had hoped, with Army Group B's assault on Belgium drawing the British and French forward, and though they knew the Belgians, for all their tenacity, were withdrawing ahead of them, spirits remained high. The Allies believed this was the main enemy effort, and they were confident that their superior numbers would check the advance.

But it was through the supposedly impenetrable Ardennes that the main German thrust was coming as the heavily mechanised Army Group A rumbled forward. The largest



concentration of tanks ever seen was more than 160 kilometres deep and it met little effective resistance as it pushed on to the River Meuse.

Its main concerns were logistical - here were 86 divisions employing around 1,800 tanks - as Panzers and armoured vehicles, artillery and supply columns became ensnarled in traffic jams, and staffers fought frantically to co-ordinate movement orders.

And yet still the push continued. By the evening of 12 May, the first armoured divisions had arrived at the Meuse in two positions and though bridges had been blown and the French resistance was stiff, the Germans powered on. By the end of the following day, four bridgeheads had been established, the Luftwaffe's heavy bombers and Stuka dive-bombers paralysing French artillery positions while anti-tank and anti-aircraft fire neutralised French defensive emplacements on the west bank.

Infantry and motorcycle regiments were the first to cross, and they pushed on a further 16 kilometres, to Chémery, while the highly effective General Heinz Guderian personally oversaw the construction of a pontoon bridge for his tanks. This was the ideal time for an Allied counterattack, targeting the congested



The Panzer 35(t) with its 37mm cannon was co-opted from the Czech forces





The British Expeditionary Force fought bravely in the north but was no match for Germany's Army Group B



bridgeheads and makeshift pontoon, but only a token effort was launched and it soon fell back.

The Germans' strike through the Ardennes had allowed them to emerge at a junction between the French 2nd and 9th Armies, which contained many poorly trained reserves. The French, unlike the Germans, had not used the 'Phoney War' over the preceding eight months to train up their reserves, and when on the evening of 14 May the 9th elected to fall back to a new defensive position 16 kilometres further west, Guderian's bridgehead was some 48 kilometres wide and 24 kilometres deep. On 14 May, British and French bombers tried to destroy the vital pontoon bridge at Sedan, but around half of the 170 heavy aircraft were shot down. "Flak had its day of glory," according to Guderian.

There was now a breach opening in the French defensive line - from Sedan in the south through to Dinant around 80 kilometres north - and the Germans' three vanguard panzer corps from Army Group A poured through, Guderian around Sedan and the wily Major-General Erwin Rommel through Dinant. The French 9th Army's withdrawal had allowed Lieutenant-General Reinhardt to cross his tanks, in between the other two panzer corps, at Monthermé.

Rommel and Reinhardt then thrust onwards through 15 May, manoeuvring behind the panicked troops of the 9th Army. The French Army's Indo-Chinese machine-gunners, who had put up a spirited defence of the river crossing, were bypassed (their tenacity portending what would unfold in Vietnam many years later), and their comrades from the 9th were soon surrendering in droves.

Elsewhere, more seasoned French troops offered sterner resistance. Further north above Dinant, the 1st Army fought bravely, as it would do until it was eventually surrounded at Lille. The 9th Army, meanwhile, rallied with the appointment of General Henri Giraud, and Charles de Gaulle launched counterattacks with his 4th Armoured Division, though while these were courageous, they proved to be largely ineffectual.

As the German panzers broke through, Hitler and his chiefs of staff urged caution. General Halder, for example, wanted to line the rapidly advancing panzer corridor with the infantry battalions who were lagging far behind the main advance; the panzers had advanced 64 kilometres since their crossing of the Meuse.

On the ground, the dynamic commanders like Guderian and Rommel were itching to push onward to the English Channel. All of the seven panzer divisions from Army Group A were across the Meuse and massing into an enormous iron fist, while before them they saw the 2nd

## THE OPPOSING FORCES

The Allies were no match for Hitler's marauding army

In terms of numbers and materials available during the Battle for France, the German and Anglo-French forces were evenly matched, certainly on the ground. The Germans had 136 divisions in the west, around one-third of which were battle-hardened 'crack' troops. The French and British together had 104 divisions, along with 22 Belgian and ten Dutch.

The Allies could call on around 3,000 tanks, the Germans around 2,500, though just shy of 1,500 of these were weaker Panzer I and Panzer II models. The most effective German armour was its 349 Panzer III and 278 Panzer IV models, along with about 330 Czech tanks that had been absorbed into the panzer regiments. The best Allied tanks were the French S-35 and the Char B1. The former, known as the Souma, was widely regarded among the best tanks in the world at the time.

It was in the air that Germany dominated. The French aircraft totalled around 1,200 fighters and bombers, with the RAF adding around 600 more. The Luftwaffe's air strength, meanwhile, comprised somewhere between 3,000-3,500 fighters, bombers and reconnaissance planes, and they worked in tandem with their ground forces. The Stuka dive-bomber, in particular, proved a vital strike weapon during the first few days of the campaign.

**"It was in the air that Germany dominated, with 3,000-3,500 fighters, bombers and recon planes"**



The French S-35 tank, or Souma, boasted 40mm armour and a hefty 47mm turret-mounted cannon



and 9th Armies simply disintegrate. They felt victory was well within their grasp, and indeed it was.

Elsewhere, the French garrisons to the south were imprisoned in the Maginot Line; with no effective transport they were completely unable to mobilise. In the north, meanwhile, the French 1st Army, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and the remaining Belgian forces were gradually giving ground to Army Group B. Nevertheless, Hitler's anxieties ultimately won through and the German advance was ordered to a complete halt on 17 May.

And yet, as Hitler and his high command argued, the panzers started up again and rolled further forward. By 19 May, Guderian's divisions were just 80 kilometres

from Abbeville at the mouth of the Somme; their arrival there would split the Allied forces in two. The Allies needed to counterattack before it was too late and the French Chief of General Staff, General Gamelin, ordered a combined counteroffensive from the Allied armies north and south of the Somme.

This was the way to deal with blitzkrieg - attack the panzer corridors' unprotected flanks - but his order came just as General Weygand replaced him on 19 May. Weygand cancelled the order while he assessed the situation. When he formulated a similar plan on 21 May it was already too late. The Germans had reached Abbeville, the 9th Army had disintegrated, and the 1st Army and BEF were too constricted in the north.

The counterattacking plan's efficacy became evident on 21 May when members of the BEF launched a counteroffensive at Arras, two tank battalions (74 tanks), two infantry regiments and 70 tanks from the French 3rd Light Mechanised Division thrusting into the flanks of Rommel's 7th Panzer Division and the fearsome SS Totenkopf Division, temporarily wreaking havoc. Though outnumbered, the British tanks' heavier armour gave them a clear advantage in this close-range slugfest, and even the mighty warrior Rommel was shaken. He wrongly estimated that no fewer than five divisions had assailed him.

Though doing little to check the overall German advance, the attack at Arras proved pivotal for the BEF. It confirmed

## GERMAN INVASION OF THE WEST

### 1 Invasion begins 10 May

Army Group B moves in from the north, drawing Allies forward. Army Group A moves through the Ardennes while Army Group C engages the Maginot Line to the south.

### 2 Dinant & Monthermé 12-15 May

Rommel overwhelms feeble resistance at Dinant and crosses the River Meuse while, shortly after, when the 9th Army falls back, Reinhardt crosses at Monthermé.

### 3 Battle of Sedan 13-14 May

Guderian overcomes the French at Sedan and crosses the River Meuse. With Guderian, Rommel and Reinhardt all across, the panzer breakout begins.

### 4 Reaching Abbeville 20 May

When the Germans reach the Channel coast at Abbeville, they cut off Anglo-French forces north of the River Somme, leaving them trapped in the Dunkirk pocket.

### 5 Operation Dynamo 26 May - 4 June

Hitler's decision to halt the panzer advance on 24 May gives the British and French a chance to secure the Dunkirk perimeter and begin the evacuation of the BEF.

### 6 Paris falls 14 June

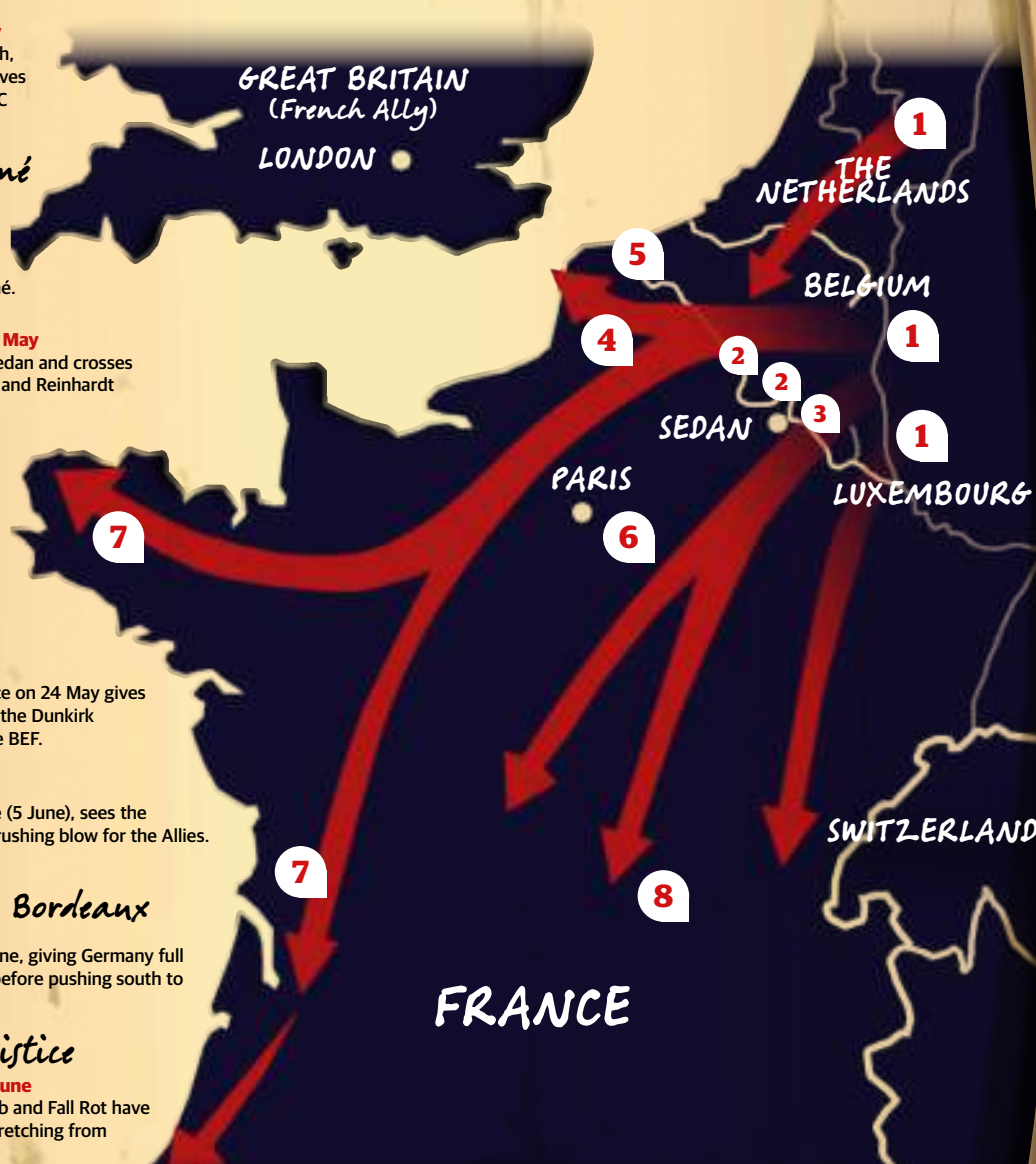
Fall Rot, the final conquest of France (5 June), sees the Germans enter Paris within nine days, a crushing blow for the Allies. The end is almost nigh...

### 7 Arriving in Brest & Bordeaux 19 June

Hoth's panzer corps reach Brest on 19 June, giving Germany full command of the French Channel coast, before pushing south to take Bordeaux.

### 8 France signs armistice with Germany 22 June

By the time France surrenders, Fall Gelb and Fall Rot have seen Germany take control of a line stretching from Bordeaux to the Swiss frontier.







The Luftwaffe's destruction of Rotterdam prompted Holland's speedy capitulation

to the German high command that its panzer spearhead was pushing too far, too fast, and it prompted the fateful decisions to halt the panzer thrust to the Channel coast on 24 May. They remained immobile for two days. This bought the BEF vital time for on 26 May, Operation Dynamo was launched to extract the BEF from the beaches and harbour at Dunkirk. The BEF was Britain's only army and it could no longer risk obliteration in the face of such a brutal German onslaught.

Certainly, Hitler did not want the BEF to escape. Mistakenly, he thought evacuation by sea would prove impossible given the Luftwaffe's aerial supremacy, and he gave the honour of the BEF's destruction to Göring and his air forces. By the time Hitler realised his error, however, Dunkirk's defences had been completed and, thanks to the courage of the Royal Navy, countless small boat owners and the RAF, over 300,000 Allied troops were evacuated by the time Dunkirk fell on 4 June.

Though Operation Dynamo's success is seen as a victory in Britain, the reality was different. Hitler had missed the chance to crush Britain's one standing army, but the Dunkirk withdrawal marked the climax of a brilliant whirlwind assault that had virtually assured the outcome of the Battle for France. The Belgian Army surrendered north of Dunkirk on 27 May, and the hardy troops of the French 1st Army were forced into surrender at Lille three days later.

In just three weeks the Germans had taken more than a million prisoners while losing only around 60,000 men. They had routed the British from France and destroyed the Dutch and Belgian armies. The French had lost 30 of their 90 divisions and were now almost entirely devoid of tanks with just three armoured divisions remaining. The only Allies still fighting their corner were two British divisions still engaged south of the Somme.

Weygand was left with 66 divisions, many of which were depleted and they now had a front that was even longer than that which had borne the brunt of the blitzkrieg assault. The Germans, meanwhile, could deploy 89 infantry divisions and 15 panzer and motorised infantry divisions,



Major-General Erwin Rommel (centre right) played a pivotal role in the Battle for France

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## "Hitler had missed the chance to crush Britain's one standing army, but the Dunkirk withdrawal marked the climax of a brilliant whirlwind assault"

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the latter split into five groups, each comprising two panzer divisions and one motorised infantry. These would provide the model for land combat for the remainder of the war in Europe.

The Luftwaffe, meanwhile, continued to operate in precise conjunction with the army and it could put some 2,500 strike aircraft - fighters and bombers - into the air. The French, on the other hand, even with aircraft hastily purchased from the US and those dispatched by the RAF, could count on fewer than half that number. When the second part of the German offensive, Fall Rot, or 'Case Red', began in earnest on 5 June, France was already doomed.

Weygand and his remaining troops offered a spirited resistance and the defence of the 'Weygand Line', stretching from the Channel at Abbeville to the Maginot Line, was organised via a strategically sound principle based on a chequerboard, whereby woods and villages were crammed with men and anti-tank weapons, capable of fighting independently and able to operate even if passed by the panzer spearheads.

The defence failed, however, though not because of cowardice or lack of cunning. It faltered because the French lacked the necessary materials. The defenders fought hard and even enjoyed some successes, especially on 5 and 6 June, inflicting heavy losses on enemy tanks. Still, the first Germans arrived in Paris on 14 June, and though there are numerous accounts of continuing courage and self-sacrifice, France was forced to offer its unconditional surrender at Compiègne on 22 June. The Battle for France was won.

France's defeat was so swift and complete that many students of war were unable to fully comprehend it. The French forces were poorly equipped for mobile operations, many were poorly trained, and for the large part they were poorly led. Simply put, France had fallen to a superior war machine. In 1940 it was the power of blitzkrieg that ensured Hitler's victory in the west. By the end of June he'd cast covetous eyes across the Channel at Britain. The fate of Europe now hung in the balance.





# Inside Rommel's Afrika Korps

This widely lauded German force was among the few unblemished by brutality – but what was life like serving under Hitler's Desert Fox?

Words Gavin Mortimer



On 6 February 1941, General Erwin Rommel found a few minutes to write a letter to his wife. He and Lucie had been married for almost 25 years, and Germany's most dashing general liked to keep her abreast

with his news. "Things are moving fast," wrote Rommel, who mentioned he had met Adolf Hitler earlier in the day. "I can only take the barest necessities with me. Perhaps I'll be able to get the rest out soon. I need not tell you how my head is swimming with all the many things that are to be done." The letter ended with a lament from Rommel that his brief leave with his wife had been cut short. "Don't be sad," he wrote. "The new job is very big and important."

Rommel spent the following days in a whirlwind of preparation and planning for his 'new job'. There was no other option. Hitler had appointed him commander of the newly formed Afrika Korps, raised as a direct consequence of Britain's crushing victory over the Italians in North Africa in December 1940.

When Rommel's aircraft touched down at Tripoli, Libya, on 12 February 1941, he was determined to drive the British out of North Africa. As the first German units began arriving at the city's harbour, he insisted that the 6,000-ton transport ship was unloaded in record time so that he could get his soldiers up to the front line as quickly as possible. "The men received their tropical kit early next morning," wrote their general. "They radiated complete assurance of victory,





This propaganda picture was taken in February 1943, just a few months before the surrender of the Afrika Korps

Image: Alamy



and the change of atmosphere did not pass unnoticed in Tripoli."

The month after the first elements of the Afrika Korps disembarked at Tripoli, thousands of kilometres north in Saxony, Germany, an 18-year-old conscript was reporting for his first day of 16 weeks of basic infantry training. Rudolf Schneider came from Stauchitz, a village in the flat farmland between Leipzig and Dresden, and had studied agriculture at college before the outbreak of war.

His infantry training complete, Schneider was posted to North Africa in early 1942 to join the Afrika Korps. "When I arrived in Libya, I was interviewed by an officer," recalled Schneider. "They sent me to the Kampfstaffel, General Rommel's personal combat unit of nearly 400 men, which was commanded by Rudolph Kiehl." Kiehl had served under Rommel in 1939 in the Führer-Begleit-Battalion, Adolf Hitler's bodyguard unit, and the Kampfstaffel served a similar purpose to the Afrika Korps' commander in North Africa. "I was selected for the Kampfstaffel because I knew a lot about British and American vehicles," said Schneider. "As part of my education I had learned how to drive English and American tractors and trucks, and the fact I spoke English was also a factor."

Schneider arrived in Libya at the moment Rommel's supply problems were coming to

## "Dubbed the Desert Fox, his resourcefulness, fearlessness and willingness to share the same hardships as his men endeared him to the Afrika Korps"

a head. In March 1942, the Afrika Korps took delivery of 18,000 tons of supplies, 42,000 tons fewer than he estimated his army required for victory in North Africa. He also received a few thousand additional men to augment his three German divisions, but demands for additional formations were refused because Berlin's priority was the Eastern Front.

In the year or so between the Afrika Korps arriving in Libya and Schneider's posting to North Africa, the Desert War had witnessed a series of fierce, bloody battles with neither side able to land a knockout blow. Rommel had enjoyed the most recent success, an offensive in February that saw the Allies pushed back to a defensive position running south from Gazala to Bir Hacheim. The Gazala Line, as it was known, had been occupied just a few months earlier by the Afrika Korps. However, a British

offensive dislodged them in November and December 1941.

It was characteristic of the Desert War, a fluid conflict that ranged back and forth across Libya, in which armour was crucial. Rommel had shown his genius for armoured warfare as commander of the 7th Panzer Division during the invasion of France in 1940, but in Libya he quickly realised that mass tank battles were futile. Instead, he deployed his 88mm anti-aircraft guns as anti-tank guns, using them to destroy the enemy's armour before sending his panzers forward to wreak havoc on the exposed artillery and infantry.

The boldness of Rommel (who was promoted to field marshal in June 1942) soon became legendary. Dubbed the Desert Fox, his resourcefulness, fearlessness and willingness to share the same hardships as his men,



Clockwise from top right:

- A Bantam jeep in the hands of two Afrika Korps soldiers
- Schneider recalls that while they liked their caps, they were jealous of the 8th Army's lightweight uniform

- Rommel, second from right, seen inspecting some of his men in the summer of 1942
- The Kampfstaffel at rest. Neither the SAS nor the LRDG ever used tents when on operations in the desert



# Machines of the Korps

Vehicles were crucial in the Desert War and though the panzers were a potent weapon, the Afrika Korps often had to improvise because of supply problems

A Panzer III F model, advances across the Western Desert during the Gazala campaign, June 1942

## PANZER MK III

For much of the war in North Africa, the Afrika Korps used the Panzer Mark II and III tanks, with the more advanced Tiger Tank not arriving until late 1942. Manufactured by Daimler-Benz, the model from the late 1930s onwards, the Mark III, had a 50mm cannon and two 7.92mm machine guns, as well as thicker armour than its rivals. These features gave the panzers superiority over Allied tanks until the arrival of the Sherman in autumn 1942. Another innovative feature of the Mk III – which had a crew of five – was a three-seat turret complete with intercom system.

**“The SAS began using jeeps in the desert in 1942 and their effectiveness was evident to the Afrika Korps, who avidly used any of the American-made vehicles they captured”**

## WILLYS BANTAMS JEEP

The SAS began using Jeeps in the desert in 1942 and their effectiveness was evident to the Afrika Korps, who avidly used any of the American-made vehicles they captured. Fitted with heavy machine gun mountings, the Jeeps had a payload of 270 kilograms and a maximum range of approximately 400 kilometres on a single tank of fuel.

Rudolf Schneider is seen here digging out his Willys jeep



## SD.KFZ.222 RECONNAISSANCE CAR

The Sd.Kfz.222 was an armoured reconnaissance car that was effective because of its armament – a 20mm cannon and machine gun in its open turret – and performance. With its rear-mounted 90-horsepower, liquid-cooled engine, the vehicle was capable of reaching 69 kilometres per hour on roads. It was also known for its durability.



The Sd.Kfz.222 was criticised for its small fuel tank and would often be laden with Jerry cans



endeared him to the Afrika Korps. He wasn't a commander who inspired love in his men; he was too brusque and abrasive for that. Instead he inspired confidence.

Rudolf Schneider soon learned for himself what sort of man his commander was when he was selected as one of Rommel's drivers. "When I drove him he rarely talked and obviously I was very intimidated by him," he reflected. "I was just a young soldier driving a general. He was not a man for small talk, not with me or anyone. If he asked a question, he wanted an answer, brief and concise. If you talked too long, he would tell you to shut up."

"I wouldn't say he was arrogant, but he believed in himself too much as a commander. He didn't ask the opinion of his other officers, he had great confidence in his own decisions... and some German officers didn't like Rommel."

Schneider also remembered his commander as "a very straight and correct officer... he didn't fear anything and we, the soldiers, respected him".

Rommel's rectitude was one reason why the North African campaign is remembered as the only 'clean' theatre of the war, inasmuch as any war can be 'clean'. The other reason was the absence of SS units or the Gestapo. "I never saw any Nazis the whole time I served in the Afrika Korps," recalled Schneider. "In the Kampfstaffel, our conduct had to be exemplary. One time,



Two members of the Kampfstaffel on a captured LRDG radio truck. The soldier on the left is trying out the Vickers K

I think in Bouerat (a town in western Libya), a German soldier, not from my unit, raped a local woman. Rommel had him shot and the firing squad came from my unit - 12 men, but only six of the rifles had live rounds."

Schneider saw Rommel's 'correctness' first hand, not long after joining the Kampfstaffel. Having driven Rommel to inspect some tank positions, Schneider alerted his commander to the approach of a vehicle. As it neared, they saw through the dust it was a British ambulance. "I was on my rounds and accidentally ran my ambulance into a German tank position," remembered Alex Franks of the 7th Armoured Company. "I was terrified."

Schneider estimated that there were about 20 members of the Kampfstaffel, as well as Rommel, speaking in English. They ordered Franks out of the vehicle. "He came out with 20 rifles pointed at him and Rommel said 'Stand to attention, you are in front of a German general,'" recalled Schneider. "Rommel then asked him where he came from. Alex told him he was an ambulance driver who had lost his way. Rommel asked if he had a compass and Alex said that he didn't."

The ambulance was searched for weapons but there were none, and Rommel then asked

## LIFE IN THE KAMPFSTAFFEL

**The Kampfstaffel was Rommel's elite 400-strong combat force, and Rudolf Schneider was the last survivor of the unit whose job was to protect the Desert Fox**

Born in 1923 in rural eastern Germany, Rudolf Schneider enrolled at the German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture in Witzenhausen in the 1930s. His dream was to farm in southwest Africa, but in 1941, shortly after his 18th birthday, he was drafted into the army. He underwent basic training in Dresden before being shipped to North Africa in early 1942 to join the Afrika Korps.

In Libya, Schneider's knowledge of British and American vehicles proved so valuable that he was selected to join the Kampfstaffel, Rommel's reconnaissance and bodyguard force of nearly 400 soldiers. "I was one of Rommel's drivers," said Schneider. "I was chosen because I knew English and could operate their equipment. I also had a good memory for landscapes, which was important in the desert. We would drive long distances and all you would see was stones and sand, stones and sand."

Schneider was captured in May 1943 and sent to the US, where he spent the rest of the war as a prisoner in Camp Swift, Texas. He spent many of his days there picking cotton for five cents an hour. After the war, Schneider returned to Europe, but the British, discovering he had been a member of Rommel's Kampfstaffel, detained him when his ship arrived in Liverpool. He spent three years working as a farm labourer in Staffordshire. He finally returned to then East Germany in 1948, and married his childhood sweetheart, who had waited for him.

**"He was selected to join the Kampfstaffel, Rommel's reconnaissance and bodyguard force of nearly 400 soldiers"**



Schneider, right, and a comrade grab themselves some fresh gazelle meat in Tunis, early 1943



**"It was one of the features of the Korps, a discipline and camaraderie nurtured in the German Army's training, underpinned by the classlessness of National Socialism"**

Franks his destination. It was a hospital, but Franks was way off the beaten track. "Rommel pointed him in the right direction and off he went," recalled Schneider. Franks survived the war and met Schneider in 2009.

Rommel had been inspecting his tank positions as part of preparations for a major offensive against the British positions along the Gazala Line. The aim of this was to capture Tobruk, the Libyan port that had remained stubbornly in Allied hands throughout the fluctuations of the Desert War.

The offensive began on 26 May 1942, with the Italians launching a frontal assault on the British and South African troops holding the Gazala Line. Rommel had held a poor opinion of his Latin allies since arriving in Libya in February 1941. Within a few weeks, his adjutant, Major Schraepfer, was writing to Rommel's wife about the deficiencies of the Italians: "They either do not come forward at all, or if they do, they run at the first shot," he explained. "If an Englishman so much as comes in sight, their hands go up."

Schneider didn't share this view of Germany's ally. "The Italian soldier was a very good soldier

but very badly treated," he wrote.

"The Italian officers had special food and the soldiers had poorer food. The Italian officers had brothels but not the soldiers. The officers in general had a better standard of living. In the Afrika Korps, officers and men had the same food and shared the same conditions."

One source of simmering discontent between the Germans and the Italians concerned rations. Schneider recalled that, "Italian officers didn't like Rommel because... there wasn't much trust." The antipathy was reciprocated by the German commander and his men, all of whom blamed the Italian high command for the poor quality of their rations. It had been agreed in early 1941 that the Italians would supply the Afrika Korps with rations, which they did, but what they provided was barely fit for human consumption. "This was one of the reasons we didn't believe in the Italians, they didn't keep their word [about rations]," explains Schneider. "They had a lot of fresh oranges, and we didn't get any."

Instead, the Afrika Korps received tins of preserved meat, on which were stamped the

initials AM. They stood for 'Amministrazione Militare', but the Italian and German soldiers preferred 'Asinus Mussolini', or Mussolini's arse, instead. Another source of complaint for the German soldiers was the hard black bread. Yet despite their resentment towards the rations, the Afrika Korps ate what they received with characteristic stoicism. It was one of the features that defined the Korps - a discipline and camaraderie that was nurtured in the German Army's training, underpinned by the classlessness of National Socialism.

Schneider confirmed the view. "In the Kampfstaffel, the men came from everywhere: Saxony, Bavaria, Prussia or, in Rommel's case, Swabia, in southwest Germany. No one region



An M40 steel helmet of the Afrika Korps. These were fitted with ventilation holes to help with the baking heat



Another German propaganda image shows a heavily armed Afrika Korps patrol. Note the scorpion symbol on the bonnet





dominated and there were no factions. We all got on."

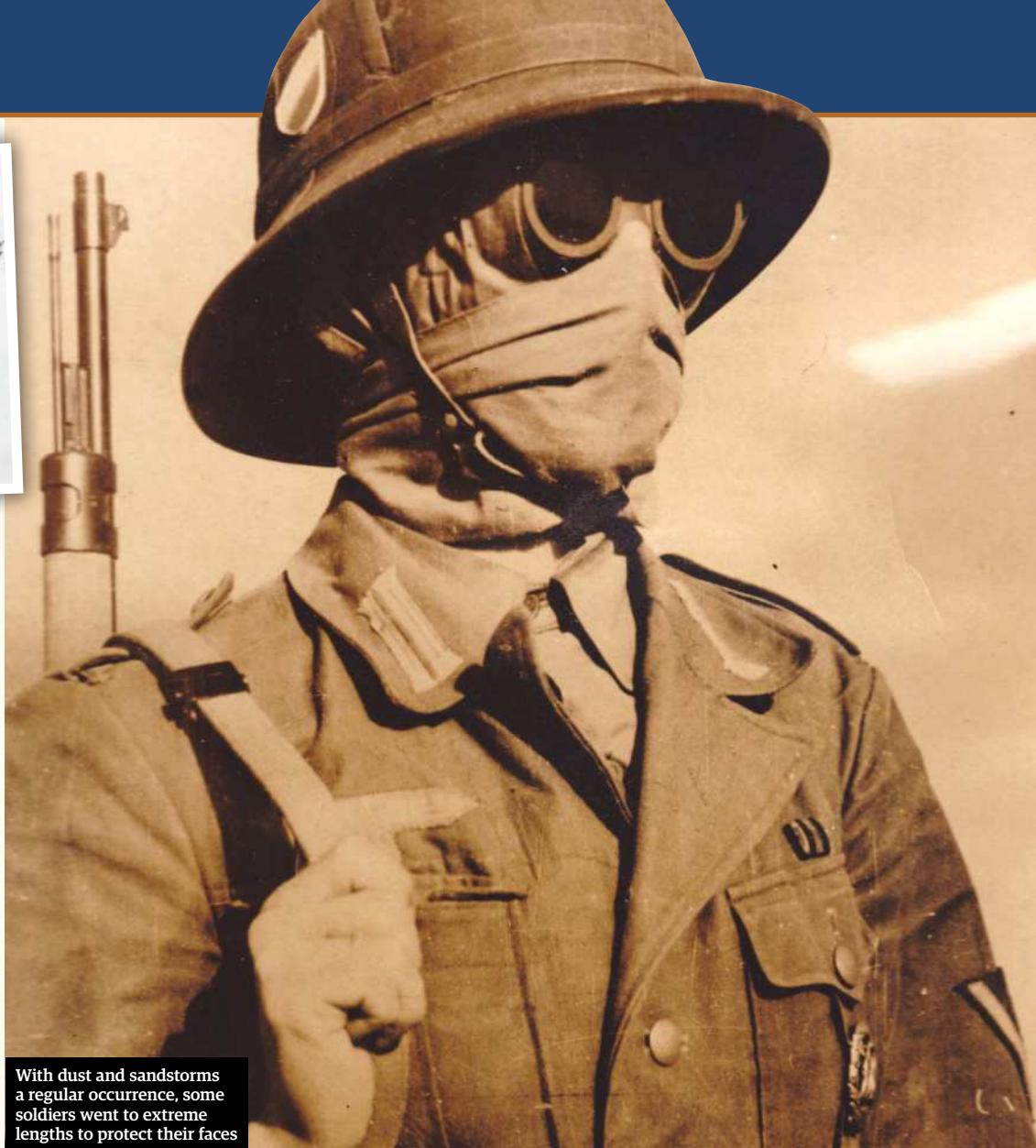
German military training also placed an emphasis on always making ground as a team, a mobility that was interdependent and interchangeable across the army so that an infantryman, tankman, artilleryman and engineer all had an implicit trust in one another's role. This instilled in the German soldier a confidence and adaptability that was absent from their British counterparts.

Broad as the parameters of the Afrika Korps' training were, they didn't allow officers to go outside of this framework, unlike the British, who possessed a type of officer more innovative and imaginative than most on the German side. Two such men were David Stirling, founder of the Special Air Service (SAS), and Ralph Bagnold, who, in June 1940, raised the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG).

There were sound military reasons why Rommel never formed a special forces unit to rival that of the SAS and LRDG, notably the constant fuel constraints and the fact that the British military installations were less remote and better guarded. Ultimately, however, it was because the German military mind was predicated on organisation and not innovation. "It is true that we didn't have the initiative of the British," said Schneider. "We were trained to fight and think as a team, not as individuals."

Additionally, the Afrika Korps was more wary of the desert than the LRDG. Ralph Bagnold was an eminent desert explorer in the 1920s, as were several other LRDG officers. They had accumulated a knowledge and respect for the environment that gave them a confidence - although crucially not an over-confidence - to penetrate into the heart of the desert, while the Afrika Korps preferred to keep close to the coastal regions. "We knew the LRDG were situated around Siwa (oasis) but we were told to keep our distance," remembered Schneider. "We didn't like to go too far into the desert, because if we were wounded, there would be no one who would come and help us. Occasionally we saw LRDG patrols, but we had instructions not to go after them."

Nonetheless, when the Axis forces launched their offensive on 26 May 1942, Rommel led



his Afrika Korps south into the desert, while the Italians attacked the Gazala Line. In effect, the German commander was throwing a right hook at the Allies, sweeping round the French garrison in Bir Hacheim and attacking the British behind the Gazala line.

"We drove south of Bir Hacheim and then came at the Gazala Line from the east," recalled Schneider. "He (Rommel) said we would break the Line from the rear. During the day we laid up, hiding our vehicles because the RAF controlled the skies, and so we drove only at night... Rommel led us. He did the navigating. We didn't know where we were going. He just ordered us to follow him."

For three days the Axis and Allied armour fought, while the 1st Free French Brigade held out at Bir Hacheim. Rommel recalled on 28 May that "British tanks opened fire on my command post, which was located close beside the Kampfstaffel and our vehicles. Shells fell all around us and the windscreen of our command omnibus flew into fragments".

Schneider's hand and stomach were peppered with shrapnel: flesh wounds mostly, not enough to take him out of the battle. But the intensity

of the British resistance caused Rommel to order his Afrika Korps to pull back and form a defensive position called 'The Cauldron'. The British drove on, confident that a victory was within their grasp, but the Afrika Korps, despite losing some 200 tanks in four days of fighting, countered with the German 88mm anti-tank guns, inflicting a heavy toll on the British armour. On 10 June, Bir Hacheim fell and three days later the British armour was defeated on 'Black Saturday'.

The 8th Army retreated from the Gazala Line, withdrawing all the way to El Alamein in what became known as the 'Gazala Gallop'. On 21 June, Tobruk finally fell to the Germans, along with about 35,000 British and Commonwealth troops. Schneider remembered the fall of Tobruk as a "wonderful" moment - not because of the victory, but because of the British rations. "We had lived for months on this heavy black bread and these awful Italian rations. Suddenly we found fresh fruit and vegetables, even strawberry jam."

Life in North Africa was unquestionably tougher for the Afrika Korps than for their enemies. The Allies were well supplied and were also able to rest and recuperate in sophisticated



cities with delights on offer that the German forces could only dream of. "Unlike the British, who had Alexandria and Cairo, which were full of restaurants and bars and other things, we had no cities like that," reflected Schneider. "So the opportunity to escape from the war for a few days wasn't possible." Even in the few towns that were in their hands, such as Benghazi and El Agheila, "it was forbidden, on the orders of Rommel, to enter a restaurant where Italian soldiers were, and we would be punished if we disobeyed him".

There were other spoils of war to be had in Tobruk, aside from strawberry jam. "We captured field guns and tanks - Matildas and also some Stuarts - and some command vehicles," said Schneider. "We started to use those but we preferred to use our own small arms, the 98k carbine and MP40 (Schmeisser), which were good weapons." By the summer of 1942, 85 per cent of the Afrika Korps' transport consisted of vehicles manufactured in Britain and America.

In his memoir of the Desert War, *Alamein*, Major Paolo Caccia-Dominioni, an Italian engineer, wrote that: "Captain Kiel [sic], the commander of Rommel's Kampfstaffel, invented a new sport for the entertainment of his men: tall and fair as they were, dressed in British khaki, bare-headed in accordance with the fashion current in both armies, driving captured vehicles that still bore their original markings. They would infiltrate among the enemy rearguard, tag along quietly for a while - and then suddenly reveal their true identity with the merry rattle of machine-gun fire! Any number of prisoners had been rounded up in this way."

While Schneider agreed that they did indeed use the captured Allied vehicles, he dismissed the idea they wore the enemy's uniform. "It was strictly forbidden to put on any part of the British uniform," he said. "But we actually liked the British uniform in the desert because it was light. Our uniform was cotton but it was heavier than what the British had to wear, although we liked our caps."

On 23 June, Rommel's men crossed the Libyan border on the heels of the retreating British 8th

Army. Six days later, the Kampfstaffel and the 90 Light Division entered Mersa Matruh. The Allies' last coastal fortress was now in German hands, but it would be the last decisive success of Rommel's campaign. On 3 July, he wrote to his wife that "resistance is too great and our strength exhausted".

The Afrika Korps had sent the Allies fleeing back into Egypt but they had reached the end of their supply line, and of their endurance. "After we took Tobruk, we got the order as Rommel's personal combat unit to cross the Libyan border and attack Mersa Matruh," reflected Schneider. "It was one of the greatest mistakes of Rommel, to push towards El Alamein. He should have gone back to the Egypt border once again."

A little under four months later, General Montgomery launched his offensive at El Alamein, the battle that would ultimately win the war in the desert for the Allies. "We knew that the British were preparing to attack El Alamein but we didn't know the power they had," said Schneider.

"On 23 October, they started the attack. We were in the south of the Alamein line, only lightly defended because Rommel thought Montgomery would attack the north of the line. When the British attacked we fought them off, but then received orders to withdraw slowly through an anti-tank defensive position about 50 kilometres west of El Alamein... we didn't believe it when we were ordered to withdraw."

Kampfstaffel Kiehl fought with great gallantry in the initial assault on the Alamein Line, using the American Honey tanks they had captured at Gazala to push back the Free French. Further north, the fighting was just as ferocious but, gradually and inexorably, the Allies began to advance west.

Schneider and the rest of the Afrika Korps began a withdrawal that while disciplined and



An infantryman stands beside a knocked out M3 Lee in Tunisia, December 1942

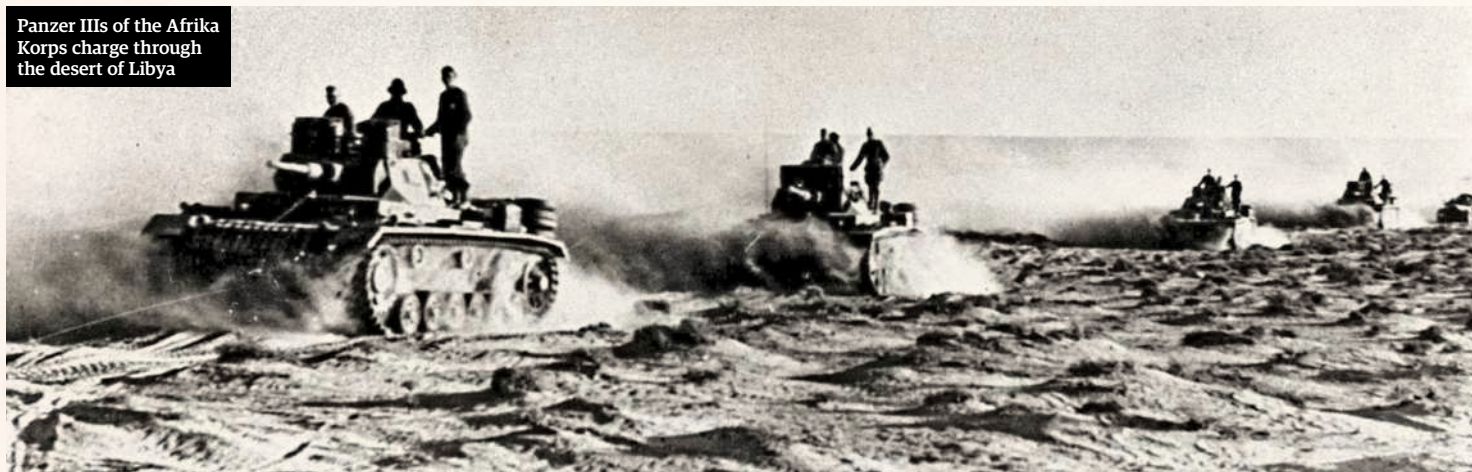
orderly, continued for the next six months as the Allies pushed across Libya and into Tunisia.

"My last fight with the British was at Sidi Ali el Hattab, just west of Tunis," said Schneider. "We captured six British soldiers and we wondered what to do with them. Our commanders told us it was forbidden to shoot them, so we shared our rations with them, but at this point we had hardly any left. Just stale black bread. No toilet paper or coffee, and we were making tea by boiling water and adding some leaves from trees. The British soldiers looked at us and said, 'You live like dogs'. They didn't understand, seeing the state we were in, why we continued to fight."

Schneider was eventually captured by US troops near to Kelibia in Tunisia on 16 May 1943. "On the one hand, I was happy to have survived when so many of my comrades had died," he reflected. "But we were prisoners and we all wondered what would now happen to us."

Schneider was shipped to the US where he spent the rest of the war. When he finally returned to what was, by then, East Germany, he learned that of the 389 soldiers in the Kampfstaffel, "only 39 came back". He was one of the lucky ones, perhaps the luckiest of all, because waiting for him when he returned to Saxony was his girlfriend, whose photograph he had kept with him throughout seven years apart. "I didn't talk to Rommel much, but one of [the] few times he spoke to me was to ask if I had a girlfriend," said Schneider. "I said 'I do, Herr General', and he replied 'I hope only one'."

Panzer IIIs of the Afrika Korps charge through the desert of Libya





# Battle of the Atlantic

Discover the key role played by the US in the longest campaign of World War II

Words Scott Reeves

## THE BATTLE BEGINS

3 SEPTEMBER 1939

Just hours after Neville Chamberlain told the British people they were at war with Germany, the first shots of the conflict were fired. Those on board the passenger liner SS Athenia were unaware it was being tracked by the German submarine U-30. Two torpedoes were fired when the liner was 322 kilometres off the northwest coast of Ireland, causing it to sink in 14 hours with the loss of 117 lives, including 28 Americans.

The targeting of the Athenia indicated Germany was adopting a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. According to the accepted rules of war, the U-boat commander should have searched the liner and only captured or sunk it if it was engaged in military activity or refused to stop. The Battle of the Atlantic had begun in a particularly cruel manner.

One of the 1,301 survivors of the Athenia sinking returns to Galway Harbour

A U-boat shells an unknown merchant vessel in the Atlantic - action like this served to increase hostility to the Nazis in the US

## THE BATTLE IS NAMED

30 SEPTEMBER 1940

In Missouri's *St Joseph News-Press*, journalist Ernest Lindley became one of the first to refer to "the Battle of the Atlantic".

## OCCUPATION OF GREENLAND

9 APRIL 1941

President Roosevelt created the protectorate of Greenland to ensure that the US neutrality zone in the western Atlantic remained intact.

## MERCHANT SHIPS TARGETED

21 MAY 1941

SS Robin Moor, an American merchant ship, was carrying general cargo when it was stopped by the German submarine U-69 1,207 kilometres west of Sierra Leone. Despite flying a neutral flag, the 46 crew and passengers were given 30 minutes to board the lifeboats. Once they were safely in the water, the submarine fired a torpedo at Robin Moor's rudder and shelled the bridge. The lifeboats were abandoned by the submarine with only four loaves of bread and two tins of butter to sustain them until their rescue, days later.

American merchantmen now feared an unprovoked raid from beneath the waves. Hitler feared that the actions of his U-boat commander might provoke the US into war and ordered similar attacks to cease, but it was too late to prevent the growth of anti-German feeling in the US.



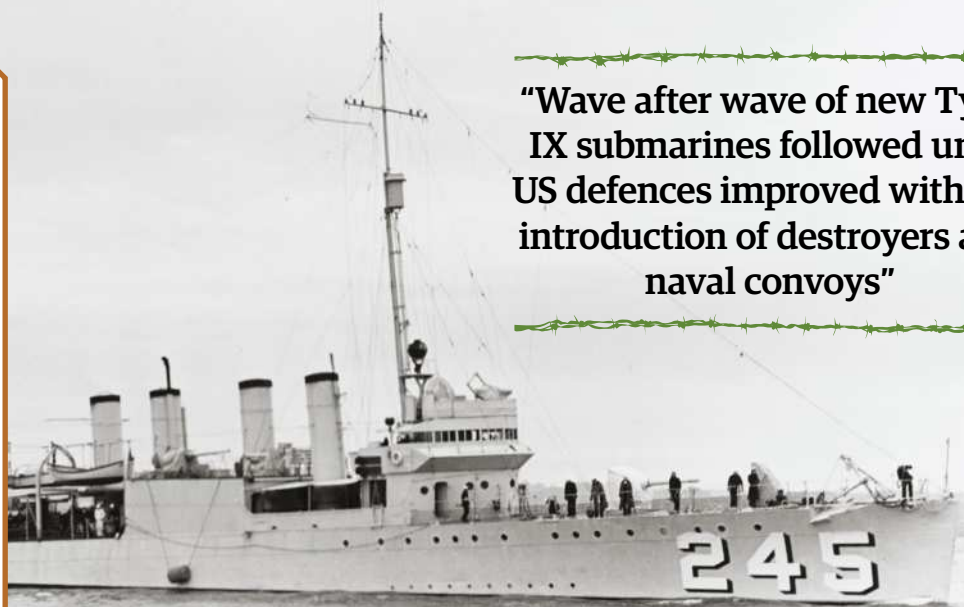
## THE SINKING OF USS REUBEN JAMES

31 OCTOBER 1941

President Roosevelt had tried to ensure US neutrality through the creation of the Pan-American Security Zone, a region of the western Atlantic in which acts of war would not be tolerated. To enforce the zone, the US military conducted sea and air patrols. Stretching the definition of 'neutral' to the limit, from 1941 US Navy ships escorted Allied convoys across the Security Zone to ensure no belligerent acts took place in it.

On Halloween 1941, US destroyer Reuben James was on convoy escort duty when it was struck by a torpedo fired by U-552. An explosion in the forward magazine ripped apart the bow and the ship sank immediately with the loss of 115 of the 160-man crew. The sinking of the first US Navy ship, before the nation had officially joined the war, further increased tensions between Germany and the US.

"Wave after wave of new Type IX submarines followed until US defences improved with the introduction of destroyers and naval convoys"



## OPERATION DRUMBEAT

13 JANUARY 1942

The first U-boats reached US waters in Operation Drumbeat, a patrol targeting Allied shipping off the North American coast.

The torpedo that sank Reuben James was probably intended to strike one of the merchant ships it was escorting

Dixie Arrow, one of many American tankers lost off the east coast in 1942

## DECLARATION OF WAR

11 DECEMBER 1941

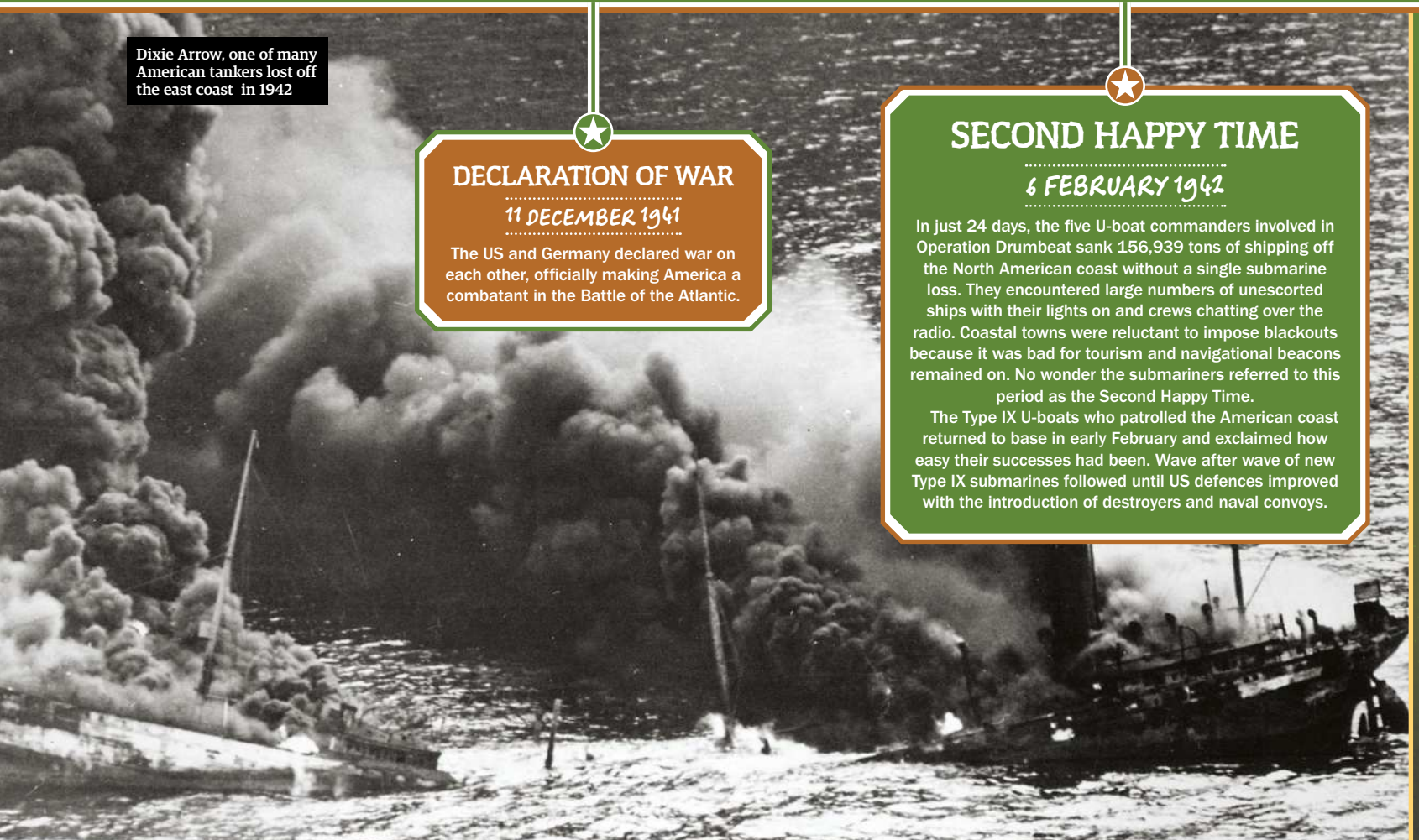
The US and Germany declared war on each other, officially making America a combatant in the Battle of the Atlantic.

## SECOND HAPPY TIME

6 FEBRUARY 1942

In just 24 days, the five U-boat commanders involved in Operation Drumbeat sank 156,939 tons of shipping off the North American coast without a single submarine loss. They encountered large numbers of unescorted ships with their lights on and crews chatting over the radio. Coastal towns were reluctant to impose blackouts because it was bad for tourism and navigational beacons remained on. No wonder the submariners referred to this period as the Second Happy Time.

The Type IX U-boats who patrolled the American coast returned to base in early February and exclaimed how easy their successes had been. Wave after wave of new Type IX submarines followed until US defences improved with the introduction of destroyers and naval convoys.





## FIRST U-BOAT SUNK

14 APRIL 1942

A shift in the balance of power on the eastern seaboard began with a frantic midnight engagement in April 1942. USS Roper, a destroyer, used its British radar system to detect a surfaced submarine lying close to Bodie Island Light in North Carolina. The U-boat, U-85, turned away and fled south, unsuccessfully firing a torpedo when Roper got too close. The submarine dived after the range closed further, but not before being raked with machine gun fire. After 11 depth charges were dropped, a number of crew were found dead in the water. U-85 was the first submarine sunk in American waters. By the end of the year, eight more suffered the same fate – the result of an increased number of US ships on coastal patrol and the use of convoys in American waters.

## CAPTURE OF KLAUS BARGSTEN

2 JUNE 1943

Captain Klaus Bargsten was reading in his bunk in the early hours of the morning when the submarine he commanded, U-521, was attacked by a US Navy submarine chaser. The depth charges rendered many of the sub's instruments ineffective, so Bargsten ordered the U-boat to surface and climbed the conning tower to make a visual inspection of the damage. However, the submarine chaser was still on the prowl and hit U-521 with artillery fire. Bargsten made the order to abandon ship, but the U-boat sank quickly before anybody else could get out.

Bargsten, the sole survivor, was plucked from the sea and taken to Norfolk Naval Base for questioning. The information he provided shed light on several unexplained losses and encounters, and also provided an insight into U-boat tactics and strategy.

## U-WHALE

18 FEBRUARY 1942

A large-scale sub hunt involving three US vessels ended in embarrassment when the target turned out to be a whale.

The 29 dead submariners from U-85 were buried in Virginia in a night-time ceremony

U-848 attempts - ultimately without success - to escape US Navy Liberator from which this photograph was taken

## BLACK MAY

24 MAY 1943

The U-boat campaign was temporarily halted after one-quarter of operational submarines were sunk in the month of May.

## THE MID-ATLANTIC GAP CLOSES

18 MARCH 1943

The battle reached a turning point in the spring of 1943 as U-boat losses increased while their tallies of victims decreased. Part of the reason submarines became less effective was the closing of the mid-Atlantic gap, a strip of ocean previously unreachable by aircraft, leaving convoys more vulnerable to underwater wolfpacks. In the middle of March, President Roosevelt issued the second of only two direct orders during the war (the first was to give Operation Torch precedence over other campaigns). Roosevelt ordered his chief of naval operations to transfer 60 B-24 Liberators from the Pacific to the Atlantic. These aircraft were stripped of armour to give them a longer range and were able to attack surfaced submarines. The 'Black Pit' of the mid-Atlantic was no longer quite so dangerous.

## BX AND XB CONVOYS

20 MARCH 1942

A new system of convoys is initiated between Boston and Halifax to counter the U-boat threat along North America's east coast.



Two-thirds of U-boats sunk in 1943 left no survivors

## CONVOY HX 300 ARRIVES SAFELY

3 AUGUST 1944

On 17 July, 102 merchant ships – 76 of flying an American flag – set sail from New York with a naval escort. Over the next three days they met up with merchant ships sailing from Canada, creating the largest convoy of the war. During the tense crossing of the Atlantic, all eyes were on the water, keeping a watch for prowling U-boat wolfpacks. However, three weeks later, every ship had docked without a single submarine attack having occurred.

The vast majority of the American vessels were Liberty ships, a low-cost, mass-produced cargo ship churned out in great number by US shipyards during the war. American industry was able to vastly exceed the losses suffered at the hands of the U-boats – in total, 2,710 Liberty ships totalling 38.5 million tons were constructed during the war.

## SURRENDER OF GERMANY

8 MAY 1945

The German admission of defeat brought to an official end the longest continuous campaign of World War II.

## CAPTURE OF U-505

4 JUNE 1944

U-505 was captured by the US Navy – the code books and machines on board helped the Allies crack the Enigma code.

Convoys offered greater protection than single ships; the numbers in them grew as the war progressed

## PAUL HAMILTON SINKS

20 APRIL 1944

The German threat in the Battle of the Atlantic was not confined to submarine warfare. One of the deadliest attacks occurred when Paul Hamilton, a Liberty ship transporting troops and high explosives, was attacked by Luftwaffe bombers.

The flight of 23 Junkers Ju 88 that sank Paul Hamilton sighted the ship – voyaging from Hampton Roads to Gibraltar – when it was 48 kilometres off the coast of Algeria. Being a veteran of four previous convoys meant nothing when the bombers dived low and fast to avoid anti-aircraft fire. A successful torpedo strike ignited the high explosives on board, causing a massive explosion. When the smoke cleared, no trace of the ship remained.

580 were killed when the Paul Hamilton was destroyed, making it one of the costliest Liberty ship losses of the war

## D-DAY

6 JUNE 1944

The heavily defended U-boat bases in France were bypassed by the Allied liberators as they were not considered targets of strategic value.

## LAST ACTION IN AMERICANS WATERS

6 MAY 1945

By the last months of the war, submarine attacks had reduced to little more than inconveniences. On 5 May, the final American merchant ship was sunk in the war when U-853, lying in wait off Point Judith, Rhode Island, fired on the coal ship Black Point. The attack led to an overnight search-and-destroy mission in which a US destroyer, two destroyer escorts and a frigate dropped over 100 depth charges. Aerial support came in the guise of two airships the following morning.

When planking, life rafts, clothing and an officer's cap floated to the surface, the destruction of the U-boat was confirmed with the loss of all 55 men on board. The same morning, U-881 was destroyed by depth charges dropped from USS Farquhar off the coast of Newfoundland. The U-boat threat was finally over.

Depth charges explode in the hunt for U-853 off Rhode Island





# The Miracle of Dunkirk

In May 1940, 340,000 Allied soldiers were saved from the full fury of the German blitzkrieg in an evacuation that kept Britain in the war

Soldiers had to wade into the English Channel before getting on the smaller boats that would transfer them to the destroyers





fter the French surrender on 22 June 1940, Britain stood alone against Nazi Germany. A scintillating blitzkrieg had knocked France out of the

war in a matter of months and the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) had only just escaped from continental Europe thanks to a hurried escape across the English Channel. The miracle of Dunkirk was an incredible feat that gave Britain both the morale and the manpower required to continue the fight against the Third Reich. Without it, the UK would have stared down the barrel of defeat.

As German panzer divisions rolled into the Ardennes in May 1940, the eight-month Phoney War that opened World War II came to an end. Britain and France, knowing the threat Hitler posed, had agreed on a defensive strategy to keep his armies at bay, trying desperately to avoid armed conflict, but the invasion of Poland was the final straw. Hitler's attention had turned to Western Europe.

The French Army had earned a reputation as one of the best in the world in the early 20th century, and it had created a defensive fortification. Called the Maginot Line, it stretched across its eastern border and the French considered it to be near-impenetrable. Meanwhile, the BEF took charge of protecting the Low Countries from the enemy.

Nine months after the invasion of Poland, on 10 May 1940, three German Army groups made their advance. Their plan was for Army Group A to hurtle through the Ardennes, a hilly, wooded area of France, while B would take care of the Netherlands and Belgium, and C would keep tabs on the Maginot Line. It was a masterstroke by Hitler and it caught the Allies completely by surprise. They had severely underestimated the strength of the German war machine, and were shocked at the speed and the ferocity of the enemy advance through the Ardennes, an area believed to be too densely forested for tanks.

## "Sailing alongside Royal Navy destroyers were cross-channel ferries, pleasure steamers and cabin cruisers"

The neutral Netherlands surrendered within a week, the white flag being waved after the intense bombing of Rotterdam had claimed the lives of 1,000 civilians. The Allied armies soon withdrew from Belgium too under Plan D, a strategy to let the country be invaded before beginning the fight back.

The French and British were under the command of Generals Pierre Billotte, Alphonse Georges and Maurice Gamelin, who were constantly at odds with each other. It didn't help that the French were poorly organised, with too much money and attention being spent on the Maginot Line, which was simply outflanked by the Germans. This, coupled with poor communication lines, obsolete tactics and a poorly trained and poorly equipped BEF, left the Allies exposed.

On 16 May, Brussels fell. The Allied forces were being pushed further and further west, and there was real concern that the dual Wehrmacht attack through the Low Countries and the Ardennes would split their forces in two.

Between 16 and 21 May, German panzer divisions sped rapidly through French towns and cities, making up 80 kilometres of ground as the British and the French carried out a fighting retreat. Army Group A now held three vital bridgeheads over the River Meuse as the Germans poured further west.

With the Battle of France seemingly lost already, plans for the evacuation of the BEF got underway. It served as a massive shock to Churchill who, with little communication on the events, had expected the BEF to hold its ground.

Despite their overwhelming success, the German panzers were in desperate need of repair. On 23 May, Commander Gerd von Rundstedt requested permission for a halt from Hitler, who agreed with fears that the front, which was now as far west as the Somme, could become overextended. The BEF had gained valuable time to begin an evacuation, but the respite was only to last three days as the port of Boulogne fell to the enemy on 25 May.

The Allied armies were getting squeezed to the coast, so the next day Operation Dynamo was finally ordered. Devised by Vice-Admiral Bertram Ramsay and directed from Dover, the plan had been mooted since 20 May and was expected to save, at most, 45,000 men. It began at 7pm that evening.

On the continent, the BEF was led by Lord Gort, who had withdrawn to Dunkirk without informing his French or Belgian allies. The hope was that he would be able to rejoin the remainder of the French forces and launch a counterattack, but it never materialised. An attack on Arras on 21 May was all that could be achieved, and it bought a little bit of time, but it wasn't enough. Operation Dynamo was originally only intended to be a partial evacuation, but with their hopes dashed, and the Allies engaged in a fighting retreat, it took on a life of its own.

For the evacuation, the British managed to muster a flotilla of 1,000 vessels. Sailing alongside Royal Navy destroyers were cross-channel ferries, pleasure steamers and cabin cruisers manned by volunteer

## HITLER'S HALT ORDER

**The Führer's pausing of the German advance ultimately helped the British instead**

Given at 11.42am on 24 May, Hitler's order to halt the advance of the German troops proved controversial. The command was given to prevent his lines from becoming overextended, and it was thought that their tank tracks would struggle in the boggy coastal terrain.

But while the order only lasted for three days, it gave the BEF a window in which to form a defence around Dunkirk and then up the scale

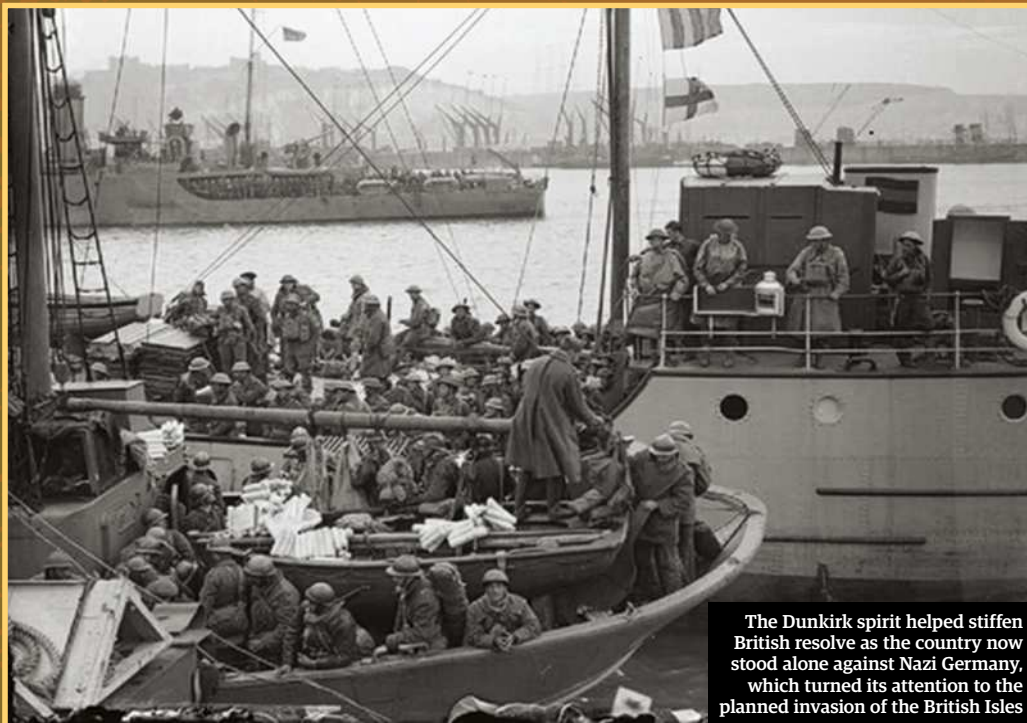
of the evacuation. Hitler's intention had been to save his own troops, but instead his men lost momentum and given the Brits a breather.

The order had a mixed response from German generals, and it remains to be seen whether it was really necessary. Either way, as the German panzers were only less than 30 kilometres away from Dunkirk, a further push could have altered the outcome of Operation Dynamo.



Images: Alamy (main)





The Dunkirk spirit helped stiffen British resolve as the country now stood alone against Nazi Germany, which turned its attention to the planned invasion of the British Isles

## "It was the ultimate display of the British fighting spirit, and in all, 900 made the journey"

civilians who wanted to do their bit to bring their men home. They were dubbed the 'little ships', and some of them were little indeed, with the smallest being the 4.4-metre-long Tamzine, now in the Imperial War Museum. It was the ultimate display of the British fighting spirit, and in all, 900 made the journey in a story that has since become historical legend.

Overnight on 26 May, around 8,000 BEF troops were safely evacuated from Dunkirk. The hurried withdrawal meant that men had to wade into the cold water of the Channel, sometimes up to their necks, to reach the small boats that would then ferry them to the larger vessels. As more and more companies made it to the coast, soldiers began to line up on the beaches, waiting for their turn to head for the next boat.

The next day, Calais fell to the Germans - the pressure was on to get as many soldiers back to Britain as possible before the enemy reached the beaches. The port itself had already been reduced to rubble by the Luftwaffe, and only a lucky few were able to board the destroyers by using the Eastern Mole, a long causeway at the entrance of Dunkirk's harbour. As many as 25,000 soldiers departed overnight on 27-28 May as the withdrawal picked up more momentum, but they needed to move faster.

The defensive perimeter around Dunkirk was getting smaller by the day, but suddenly the German land attack stopped. Wary of the prospect of losing more men to the French garrison protecting the beaches, Hitler instructed Göring's Luftwaffe to finish the job.

Out of nowhere, Stukas and Dorniers appeared in the sky. They dropped payloads onto the sand while strafing the beaches with machine-gun fire, and the BEF were sitting ducks. But there was a bright side for the British: poor coordination, adverse weather conditions and even the sand played in their favour. The impact of the Germans was nowhere near what it could have been. Göring had failed to complete the task assigned to him, and certainly not for the last time in the war.

The RAF also helped matters. Often criticised for their lack of input during the events of Dunkirk, they managed to down around 100 Luftwaffe aircraft - four German planes for every British one - but they just couldn't stop the majority of the bombing.

On the final day of May, it was Gort's turn to leave France. After spending days huddled on the beaches, 68,000 men had made it onto the larger ships and across the Channel, but none of the vessels could take any of the heavy equipment. BEF vehicles and heavy weaponry were strewn along the shoreline, left to be covered by sand, and this loss of equipment caused a shortage in Britain that lasted right up to 1941.

By June, the withdrawal was more strained. The German air assault was getting more devastating by the day and the port was slowly becoming blocked by the wrecks of sunken ships. The evacuation was now restricted to the cover of darkness, and it wasn't just the BEF trying to flee across the Channel anymore either.



The Dutch city of Rotterdam was heavily bombed, and the Netherlands surrendered to the Germans the next day

## THE BLOODY FIGHT FOR FRANCE

- 1940**
  - 10 May 1940**  
 The Phoney War ends nine months after the invasion of Poland as the Wehrmacht crosses the border into Belgium. Neville Chamberlain resigns as prime minister.
  - 14 May 1940**  
 The Dutch city of Rotterdam is heavily bombed, and the Netherlands surrenders to the Germans the next day.
  - 16 May 1940**  
 Allied armies retreat from Belgium after the fall of Brussels, fearing that they will be caught in a pincer by the dual German advance from the north and the south.
  - 20 May 1940**  
 Plans for the evacuation get underway as the Wehrmacht armoured divisions make up 80 kilometres of ground in under a week. A French counterattack on Arras holds the Germans off.
  - 23 May 1940**  
 Hitler calls a stop to the panzer advance with the front now only 30 kilometres from Dunkirk. This gives the BEF vital time to begin the evacuation.
  - 26 May 1940**  
 The day after Boulogne falls, 8,000 troops are taken back across the English Channel overnight. The next day Calais falls as the race to leave France becomes a priority.





Lord Gort, commander of the BEF

At the beginning only BEF soldiers had been allowed to leave on the boats, but now French and Belgian soldiers were eager to reach the safety of Britain to regroup. It had become a full Allied operation. Finally, on 3 June, the last men stepped onto the boats and slipped away into the darkness of the Channel. The operation was complete.

On 4 June, Prime Minister Winston Churchill addressed the House of Commons at 3.40pm. While he praised the incredible achievements of the Dunkirk evacuation, he warned that "wars are not won by evacuations". However, it would be the end of this speech that would be remembered for decades to come for its bulldog spirit: "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight in the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

The German 6th Army entered Dunkirk on the same day that Churchill's resolute words rang around parliament, and the beaches were strewn with corpses of the soldiers who hadn't made it. The Führer's gaze had already turned to Paris and the remainder of France, confident that Britain, even with this successful evacuation completed, would soon capitulate after the loss of its major ally.

The following day the Wehrmacht marched towards the French capital as 5 million refugees fled south in search of safety. Wary of what had already happened to Rotterdam and Warsaw, Paris was declared an open city and taken with

little resistance. On 22 June, the Battle of France was over.

Dunkirk was a huge feat, but it wasn't without loss. The Luftwaffe sank six British and three French destroyers, and 161 of the brave little ships were now at the bottom of the Channel. In total, 217 Allied vessels were sunk and 177 Allied aircraft were downed. The little ships had done their bit but it was ultimately the 39 British and French destroyers who ferried two-thirds of the men off the beaches. 340,000 British, French, Belgian and Canadian troops had been evacuated to safety from Dunkirk, with a total of 558,000 from ports all across France.

Britain was down but not out. The failure of the BEF to stem the Wehrmacht advance was testament to the strength of the blitzkrieg, but it also advertised how ill-prepared the British and French were. Dunkirk could have been a failure but this successful withdrawal of troops gave hope to what was left of the Western Allies

to fight on. It may not have been a victory but critically for Churchill, it hadn't been a rout.

While British newspapers were hailing it as a miracle, there were negatives. Soldiers returned with low morale, disheartened that they couldn't cope with the strength of the German panzers and convinced that the invasion of Britain wasn't far off. There were even reports of desertion and infighting at Dunkirk, with British troops forcing their French counterparts off the boats. This is known as the myth of Dunkirk, that the evacuation was deemed much more of a success than it actually was.

The fact of the matter is that if the evacuation hadn't taken place, Britain would have had huge numbers of prisoners of war and would have been on the verge of reluctant peace terms with Hitler. Even as Hitler had his photo taken in front of the Eiffel Tower, the plans for the German invasion of mainland Britain were getting underway. The French general Maxime Weygand remarked that "in three weeks, England will have her neck wrung like a chicken". The battle for France was over, but now the battle for Britain was about to begin.



Evacuations weren't just limited to Dunkirk; Allied soldiers were taken back to Britain from many French towns

- **28 May 1940**  
As the perimeter around Dunkirk is held, 19,000 more BEF soldiers make their escape, but the majority of heavy equipment is left scattered across the beaches.
- **31 May 1940**  
BEF commander Lord Gort takes his leave of Dunkirk, one of 68,000 men now evacuated.
- **1 June 1940**  
As the Luftwaffe bombardment escalates, evacuations are limited to just night-time hours under the cover of darkness.
- **3 June 1940**  
The final night of the evacuation brings the total of evacuated British, Belgian and French troops up to 340,000.
- **4 June 1940**  
Just one day after the final Allied troops have made their escape, German soldiers enter Dunkirk and claim the port. Churchill makes a rousing speech to the House of Commons.
- **5 June 1940**  
Turning south, Hitler orders the Wehrmacht to invade the remainder of northern France and to take any remaining soldiers prisoner.
- **10 June 1940**  
With Paris now under a great threat from the German advance, the French Government leaves the capital to set up a new base in Tours.
- **22 June 1940**  
Hitler orders peace terms and the French agree, signing the documents at Versailles. The Battle of France is over.









# Their Finest Hour

As Britain stood alone against Nazi Germany, young fighter pilots of the Royal Air Force defeated the vaunted Luftwaffe in the pivotal Battle of Britain



The Nazi conquest of France and the Low Countries was swift and decisive. In a matter of weeks, the British Expeditionary Force had been ejected from the European continent at Dunkirk and Adolf Hitler stood on the brink of total victory.

One significant challenge remained in the West, however. As German troops paraded down the Champs-Élysées in Paris, Hitler and his generals contemplated the invasion of Great Britain, the island nation that now stood alone against the Nazi juggernaut in the summer of 1940. For Britain, the situation was grave.

On 18 June, Prime Minister Winston Churchill addressed the House of Commons with a warning that the Battle of France was over and the Battle of Britain was about to begin. "Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties," he intoned, "and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for 1,000 years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'"

German troops and tanks were poised along the coast of France. Officers gazed across the English Channel at the white cliffs of Dover, a scant 20 miles distant. Hitler and his senior commanders knew that the invasion and conquest of Great Britain would be their sternest challenge to date. However, they were brimming with confidence as they planned Operation Sea Lion, marshalling barges from Germany and across occupied Europe to ferry combat troops to Britain's shores and considering the prospects for holding the might of the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force at bay.

One fact was plain: soldiers couldn't cross the Channel without the threat of air attack and Britain's naval might could not be restrained until the Luftwaffe owned the skies over land and sea. Control of the air was a prerequisite to any

successful invasion, and Reich Marshal Hermann Göring, chief of the Luftwaffe, assured Hitler that his fighters and bombers would sweep the RAF aside within a few weeks.

Göring managed to gather more than 1,200 Messerschmitt Me-109 and twin-engine Me-110 fighters and 1,300 bombers for the air assault. The nimble Me-109 was heavily armed and fast; however, fuel consumption as German squadrons flew from bases located from Norway to the Cotentin Peninsula restricted actual time over Britain and the Channel to only about 20 minutes during a typical sortie. The Luftwaffe bombers included a mixed bag of Heinkel He-111, Dornier Do-17 and Junkers Ju-88 aircraft capable of carrying only relatively light bomb loads. The Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive bomber, a terror weapon

that had been effective as flying artillery during the German Army's blitzkrieg across Europe, was quickly proven unsuited for a sustained bombing campaign. So many of the lumbering Stukas were lost to Royal Air Force fighters that the planes were quickly withdrawn from combat.

Opposing the vaunted Luftwaffe, the RAF mustered roughly 700 frontline Hawker Hurricane and Supermarine Spitfire fighters along with other somewhat obsolescent types under the control of RAF Fighter Command led by Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding. The Hurricane was slower than the Spitfire, so a cooperative tactic effectively emerged. While the Hurricanes primarily targeted the bomber formations, the sleek, powerful Spitfires matched up with the Me-109s in epic dogfights that have come to symbolise the desperation, heroism and sacrifice of the RAF during the Battle of Britain.

## DEFENDING AIR AND ISLAND

As the threat of invasion loomed, British air defence preparations were admirable. Fighter Command was divided into four defensive sectors, and group headquarters were established to dispense real-time intelligence as Luftwaffe air raids materialised. Headquartered at Uxbridge, Middlesex, No. 11 Group defended London and southeast England and bore the brunt of the Nazi air onslaught. Number 12 Group at Watnall, Nottinghamshire, defended Wales and the Midlands, while No. 10 Group covered southwest England and No. 13 Group was charged with the defence of Scotland and northern England.

As the Battle of Britain developed, the RAF came to fully appreciate the value of a new early warning device called radar. A system of radar posts called Chain Home effectively eliminated any hope the Germans had in the element of



Air Chief Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory led the Big Wing faction of the RAF and later commanded Allied air forces during the 1944 Normandy invasion



## TIMELINE

1940

● 4 June 1940

The evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force, the bulk of British troops on the continent of Europe, and other Allied soldiers is completed at the port of Dunkirk.

● 10 July 1940

The first engagements of the Battle of Britain occur as Luftwaffe planes attack shipping in the English Channel and draw RAF fighters into the air.

● 15 August 1940

RAF fighters claim 75 German planes and lose 30 to enemy fighters while defending against heavy bombing raids on their precious airfields.

● 17 August 1940

RAF Fighter Command calls for Bomber Command pilots to transfer in order to make good the losses sustained thus far in heavy air combat.

● 18 August 1940

Called Black Thursday by the Germans, both sides lose heavily during continuous air battles. Losses among Stuka dive bombers are so severe that the planes are withdrawn from combat.

● 24 August 1940

Apparently off course, Luftwaffe bombers drop their deadly cargoes on London, hitting the centre of the city, residential areas, factories and the docks of the East End.



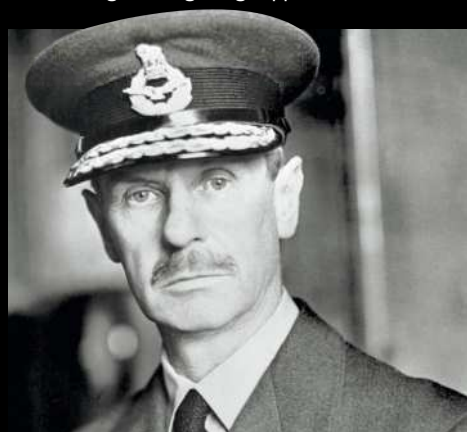
### DER ADLERTAG 13 August 1940

On Eagle Day, the Luftwaffe stages large-scale raids against targets in England, including radar stations and airfields. RAF fighters shoot down 46 German planes.

## RIVALRY IN THE SKIES

Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding is rightly given the lion's share of credit for the RAF victory in the Battle of Britain. However, for Dowding it came at personal cost.

In the midst of the fighting, a difference in tactics emerged within the highest echelons of the RAF. Dowding pursued a Fabian strategy, avoiding major air battles that might cripple Fighter Command beyond repair. Meanwhile, another RAF faction, the Big Wing advocates, championed large, set-piece encounters with the Luftwaffe. While Dowding was supported by Air Vice Marshal Keith Park, their opponents were powerful, including Air Chief Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory. The debate rages, but on 24 November, leadership of Fighter Command passed to Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sholto Douglas, a Big Wing supporter.



Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding, who won the battle but lost the command due to tactical disagreements

surprise. Even while under direct Luftwaffe attack, the most sophisticated radar network in the world continued to function.

## THE BATTLE JOINED

Hitler shared Reich Marshal Göring's optimism for an easy aerial victory and issued Directive No. 16, tentatively scheduling Operation Sea Lion for 15 August 1940, just over a month after the effort to eradicate the RAF was undertaken. The Germans referred to the opening phase of the Battle of Britain as Kanalkampf, or the Channel Battle. The earliest targets of the Luftwaffe air offensive were shipping and barge traffic in the English Channel, port facilities at Dover and other harbours on the southeast coast of England, and aircraft manufacturing facilities.

Marauding German bombers sank numerous British merchant ships during more than a month of Kanalkampf raids, and the Royal Navy relocated most of its ships and personnel west from Dover to Portsmouth. On 25 July, Stukas ravaged a convoy transporting coal. When RAF fighters intervened, the Germans lost 16 aircraft and the British seven. Two weeks later, German bombers sank four ships and damaged six others in a 20-ship convoy. RAF fighters shot down 31 German planes but lost 19 of their own.

At first, the Admiralty directed that all convoys embark only at night, but subsequently the decision was made to discontinue Channel convoys and transport cargo by rail as much as possible. Still, despite pitched dogfights and daily encounters, the Luftwaffe failed to sufficiently erode the defensive strength of the RAF.

## DER ADLERTAG

Round two of the preparation for the invasion of England was postponed several times due to poor flying weather. Finally, 13 August 1940 was designated as Der Adlerstag, or Eagle Day. The objective of the renewed Luftwaffe offensive was the destruction of RAF Fighter Command during days of unrelenting air combat. Still confident of victory, Luftwaffe pilots often sang a jaunty tune with the lyric, "Wir fliegen gegen England," or "We are flying against England."

Although the Germans were aware that Chain Home radar stations provided the RAF, particularly Air Vice Marshal Keith Park's No. 11 Group, with some measure of early warning,



they never fully grasped the significance of the network in RAF fighter deployment and readiness to defend against air raids. Hitting the radar stations was, however, an initial component of Adlerstag and the following two weeks.

The continuing effort to bring the RAF to its knees included the systematic bombing of its airfields scattered across southern and central England, the destruction of the 300-foot towers and installations of the Chain Home radar network, and the elimination of the planes and pilots of Fighter Command once and for all.

During Adlerstag, three radar stations were hit by Luftwaffe bombers, knocking them off the air for only six hours as a lack of planned follow-up attacks allowed Chain Home to recover. Airfields in the south were attacked. On Adlerstag the Germans lost 46 planes and the RAF just 13. However, days of intense aerial combat followed.

## AIR BATTLES INTENSIFIES

By 16 August, the air battles above England had reached fever pitch. The number of combined combatant sorties neared 2,700. Scores of RAF and Luftwaffe planes were seen tangled in the skies. On the 15th, later known as The Greatest Day, RAF pilots destroyed 75 German planes and lost 30 of their own.



## 25 August 1940

In response to the Luftwaffe bombing of London, 40 RAF bombers attack Berlin, the Nazi capital, causing Hitler to change tactics during the Battle of Britain.

## 31 August 1940

Hit by at least 100 German bombs, RAF Debden, located in Essex, northeast of London, endures its third Luftwaffe air raid.

## 7 September 1940

The Luftwaffe sends 400 bombers escorted by 600 fighters to attack the docks of London's East End. Raids occur around the clock, and later the Luftwaffe switches to nocturnal attacks.

## 17 September 1940

Aware that the Luftwaffe cannot achieve air superiority over Britain, the RAF, and the English Channel, Hitler postpones and eventually cancels Operation Sea Lion, the proposed invasion of the British Isles.

## 29 October 1940

Three coordinated Luftwaffe air raids hit London, Portsmouth and other targets in the last large-scale attacks of the Battle of Britain, although the Blitz continues against British cities.

## 31 October 1940

Generally accepted as the end of the Battle of Britain, air operations are hampered by bad weather, and Luftwaffe attacks are no longer daily events.

18 August, known to the British as The Hardest Day and to the Germans as Black Thursday, left RAF commanders deeply concerned with the staying power of their planes and pilots while Hitler's confidence in his aerial might was shaken. The Luftwaffe lost 69 planes, the RAF 68. Raids on British airfields continued with telling effect. At RAF Kenley in Surrey, all ten hangars were demolished. A dozen planes, including ten precious Hurricanes, were destroyed, and bombs cratered runways.

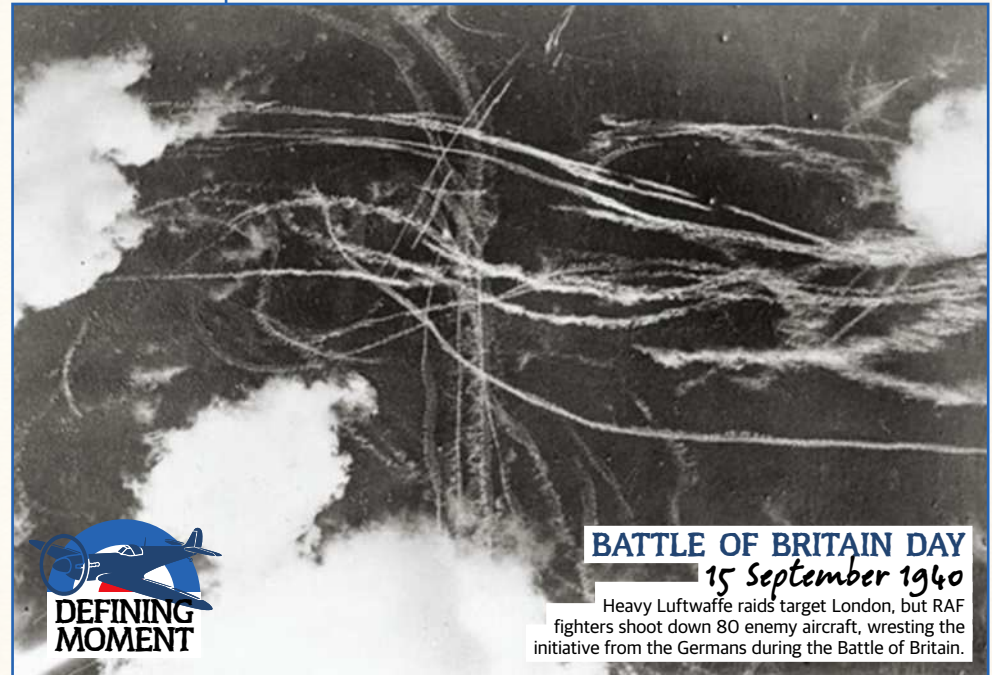
In ten days of aerial combat from 8 to 18 August, the RAF lost 175 planes, while Luftwaffe losses reached a staggering 332 aircraft. Although its losses were only about half those of the Luftwaffe, the RAF was strained to breaking point. Some replacement pilots were procured from Bomber Command, and the pace of new fighter production peaked.

On 20 August, at the height of the great air battle, Churchill rose once again in the House of Commons. He offered, "The gratitude of every home in our Island, in our Empire, and indeed throughout the world, except in the abodes of the guilty, goes out to the British airmen who, undaunted by odds, unwearied in their constant challenge and mortal danger, are turning the tide of the World War by their prowess and by their devotion. Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

## REPRIEVE AND RESURGENCE

The prime minister's stirring words touched the people of Britain, the fighting pilots of the RAF who came to be known as "The Few," and the free world. Still, the issue remained in doubt. By the end of the month, six out of seven main RAF bases in southeast England had been severely damaged. Nevertheless, the RAF had given Hitler pause. On 3 September, Operation Sea Lion, already postponed once, was delayed another three weeks.

While Luftwaffe daylight raids against RAF installations and manufacturing facilities continued, Göring also directed nocturnal attacks against military targets across Britain. However, major cities were not targeted due to the certainty of RAF retaliation against German population centers. On the night of 24 August, a few Luftwaffe bombers drifted off course,



dropping their bombs on London. The following night, RAF bombers hit Berlin.

Hitler flew into a rage and directed a new strategy: terror bombing to break the fighting spirit of the British people. On 7 September, German bombers appeared over London in strength. More than 2,000 civilians were killed or wounded. For 57 consecutive nights, the British capital was ravaged.

The Luftwaffe's refocus on British cities did not fully suspend daylight operations. However, Fighter Command was given the opportunity to rest and refit. Then, the turning point in the struggle for air superiority occurred. Two massive raids were launched against targets in Britain on 15 September. The RAF put 300 fighters into the air and shot down 80 enemy planes. The Luftwaffe could not sustain such losses; the number and size of further raids were curtailed. 15 September is still commemorated annually as Battle of Britain Day.

The catastrophe prompted Hitler to cancel Operation Sea Lion indefinitely two days later. He then ordered the barges and other naval craft assembled for the cross-Channel invasion to disperse. By mid October, it was clear that the RAF had won the Battle of Britain.

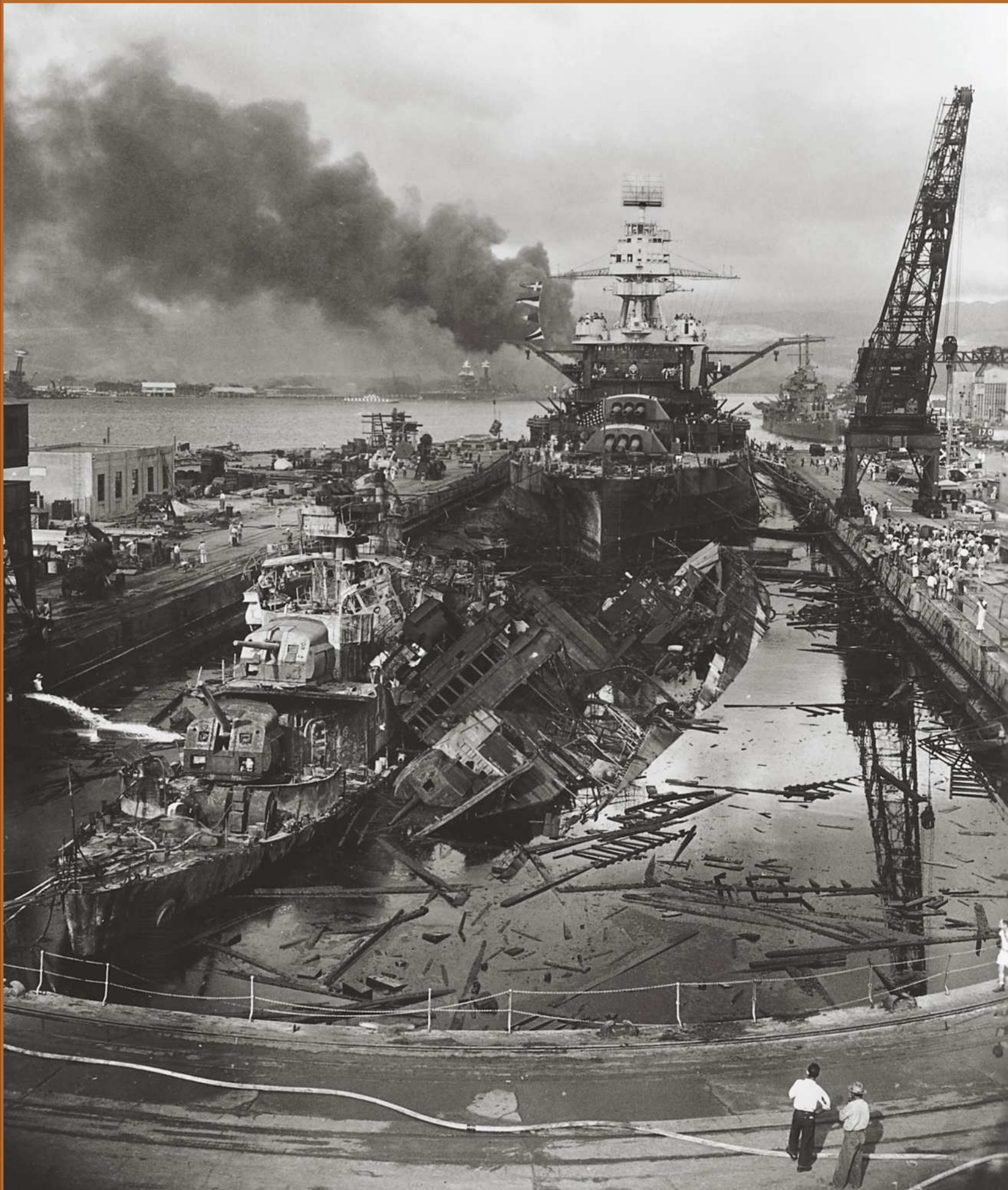
Casualties during four months of aerial combat included nearly 1,600 RAF airmen killed and over 400 wounded with 1,744 planes lost. The Luftwaffe suffered 2,600 dead, 735 wounded, and more than 900 taken prisoner. Nearly 2,000 German planes were destroyed.

## APPALLING POSTSCRIPT

Although the Nazi war machine had been slowed in the skies over England, the Luftwaffe continued its terror bombing campaign for months. London was not the only city to suffer the wrath of Hitler and the Luftwaffe. On 14 November 1940, Coventry was assailed by 400 bombers, killing 568 people and injuring another 1,200. Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and others were subjected to intense air raids. The Blitz, as it came to be known, lasted for months, until May 1941.

By then, Hitler had already concluded that Britain would never buckle under an aerial assault. British cities had burned and crumbled, but the RAF remained resolute. The Führer turned away from the West. Operation Barbarossa, the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, was only weeks away. The Battle of Britain was won, but others were just beginning.









# Attack on Pearl Harbor

The US had tried to remain neutral, but a Japanese raid on a Hawaiian naval base changed the course of history

Words Jonathan O'Callaghan

**"We expected them to come back. I thought the Japanese would take over Pearl and probably the States"**

## CHARLES EBEL

Charles Ebel, from Guilderland, New York, was serving as a seaman first class aboard the USS Curtiss, a seaplane tender, when Japanese warplanes attacked the US naval base at Pearl Harbor. From his unique vantage point across Ford Island, Ebel saw many ships sunk in the most deadly foreign attack on American soil until 11 September 2001.



On the morning of 7 December 1941, Charles Ebel and a friend were getting ready to go surfing at Waikiki Beach, Hawaii, blissfully oblivious of the horror that was heading their way.

"My buddy and I were learning to surf," said Ebel. "We'd ride these [3.6-metre] 12-foot bores and sometimes you'd be on one wave and your board would be on another, so you're just trying to catch it."

And then, in the blink of an eye, everything changed. "I was looking out the hatch [aboard the USS Curtiss] and I heard this roar, and I just saw a plane drop a bomb right onto that poor island where the planes were. And then he came back

by the hatch I was standing in, so he was side on, and he had this big smile [on his face]. He went up the channel - he was looking for another target, I guess - and that was the start of it. From then on you knew it was [going to be] tough."

Ebel sprung to action. Once all hell had broken loose, his captain told him to head to the main deck to see if there was anything he could do. There was one machine gun on the deck, which was unmanned. "In one flowing moment I jumped onto it and fired that for a while," said Ebel. "If there was any goal it was to stay alive."

What had started as just another day for Ebel in the idyllic setting of Honolulu in Hawaii turned out to be the scene for the greatest loss of life on American soil at foreign hands until 9/11 60 years

later. Around 2,400 Americans were killed and 1,200 wounded.

In the months prior to Pearl Harbor, Ebel had been on cruisers in the South Pacific. On 6 December his ship, USS Curtiss, had dropped gas off at Wake Island north of the Marshall Islands, and a last-minute decision saw his vessel head for Honolulu. Upon arrival another ship had taken the Curtiss' berthing point near Pearl Harbor, so the captain ordered the ship to swing around behind Ford Island. On the way the Curtiss picked up 378,540 litres (100,000 gallons) of gasoline, before finally berthing at night on 6 December 1941.

When the attack broke out, the Curtiss was somewhat fortunate with its position. Its berthing



point was far enough away from Pearl Harbor that it avoided the majority of the Japanese onslaught, but the horrors the crew witnessed were anything but fortunate.

As Ebel explains, though, they weren't completely removed from the action. "Our ship got credit for shooting down three planes and partial credit for a submarine," he said. "When we were in battle this submarine popped up behind us, and so we fired over the top of the sub. It went down but when it came back up it let go of a torpedo and it went right by our ship about [3.6 metres] 12 feet out. It felt like it was closer, but they always look closer in your mind. The torpedo went up the channel, I don't know where it ended up, but there was a destroyer in the channel and the submarine ran at the sight of him. It went down and never came back up again. That was the start of everything big."

As mentioned, the Curtiss had just picked up thousands of gallons of gasoline, and Ebel was all too aware of the fact that he was essentially standing on top of a massive bomb: "There was a joke I always remember I said to my buddy. I asked him where he was going and he said to get a life jacket. I said, 'See if you can find me a parachute - that life jacket isn't going to be much help when that gas goes off!'" Fortunately, the gasoline never ignited and the Curtiss survived.

Ebel saw a lot of his friends perish on the Curtiss; in total 19 would die on the ship, with many more wounded. At the time, though, he was forced to hide any nerves he might have. "We were all accustomed to the drills," Ebel explained, "but when you get the real thing, anything can happen. I was always composed pretty well, I was only a tiny bit nervous. It's part of the battle, I guess. You just get going and do your job, that's all. What else are you going to do?"

The attack itself ignited an almost psychotic fury within some of the American soldiers, highlighted by a grisly moment aboard the Curtiss. When a Japanese dive-bomber hit a crane on the Curtiss and crashed onto the deck, Ebel witnessed first-hand the extent of his fellow compatriots' anger. "When the plane hit the crane, [the pilot's] head came off and skated across the deck," states Ebel. "Our guys were vicious and they started trying to pull out his teeth with a pair of pliers. That always stood out because I was just 20 turning 21 and stuff like that bothered

Sailors at Ford Island air base stand amid plane wreckage



Captured from a Japanese aircraft, this image shows several vessels on Battleship Row under fire from torpedo planes



## THE DAY AMERICA WAS ATTACKED



The minesweeper ship Condor spots a sub 3.2km (2mi) from Pearl Harbor and sends a warning to USS Ward.

183 fighters, bombers and torpedo planes take off from Japanese aircraft carriers north of Oahu.

The Opana Radar Station on Oahu spots more than 50 aircraft bearing down on them, much to the incredulity of the two privates on duty.

A lieutenant incorrectly believes the planes sighted by the radar station to be US B-17 bombers and fatally dismisses the warning.

Japanese planes bear down on Pearl Harbor as the clouds clear.



The Japanese first bomb the US Air Force's Wheeler Field, north of Pearl Harbor, destroying most of the US warplanes on the ground.

HST

3.42am

6.10am

7.02am

7.20am

7.40am

7.55am



## "Our guys were vicious... they started trying to pull out his teeth with a pair of pliers. That always stood out because I was just 20"

me. After a while you realise [the enemy is] just another person."

With the attack fully underway, the Curtiss was dealt a stroke of fortune. A bomb had shattered the mooring on the back of the ship and, according to Ebel, "We were swinging around, and that helped us because if [the planes] passed us once then when they came back [on an attack run] we might have a different position." But while they were spared the full brunt of the Japanese assault, Ebel had an unwanted vantage point of what was happening around the rest of the harbour.

"The sky was full of them - they were like bees," recalls Ebel. "There were planes everywhere. This torpedo plane went right by us and sunk the USS Utah, and I saw when they dropped a bomb on the USS Arizona; it went right down the smoke stack and it blew it right out of the water." The surprise nature of the raid was the main reason so many of the ships would be sunk, according to Ebel: "The Japanese got to our ships with the watertight doors all open - that's why they sunk them, otherwise you couldn't. They could shoot the whole top of a ship away and it still wouldn't sink because they've got watertight doors like air pockets, and that's what keeps them afloat."

But as suddenly as the attack had begun that morning, around an hour later "they stopped all at once". Ebel and his crew, however, as you'd expect, remained on high alert. Some, including Ebel, even anticipated that Pearl Harbor was only a precursor to an invasion of the American mainland. "We expected them to come back," said Ebel. "I thought the Japanese would take over Pearl [Harbor] and probably the States."

"I always figured they could take the US over easy because they had the most aircraft carriers of anywhere in the world, and all they had to do was send one to Seattle and one to San Diego and nobody could stop them because [the US military

was mostly in Hawaii or other places. We never had much protection [in the United States during World War II]. They made a big mistake [in not coming back to take Pearl]; they lost the war right there. They might have won it. I don't know if they could have kept Hawaii or not, but if they'd gone to the States it would have been a different story. I'm glad they didn't."

For many of the Pearl Harbor survivors, the eventual Allied victory in the war four years later brought little consolation for what had happened

on that tragic day. "I just feel sorry for all those people that got killed," Ebel tells us. "There was a cemetery up on a hill there in Hawaii. They used to dig these big long trenches and all these bodies sewn up in canvas bags would just get dropped in and they'd put up a cross. They didn't know who they were. It went for as far as you could see. I remember that - it never goes away. In the back of your mind, it's always there. I wish I didn't see it but I did."

The attack took place over seven decades ago, and thus the majority of the survivors, including Ebel, have since passed away. But despite the time that has past, those who remained struggled to come to terms with it. "It doesn't prey on my mind all the time like it used to," he said. "I used to walk down the street and somebody would slam a car door and I'd jump. Not any more. I don't have any nightmares about it like I used to. But you never get over it."

Over 1,100 US Marines were killed on the USS Arizona



8am Most of a squadron of 12 unarmed American B-17s manage to land at Oahu not initially aware that Japan was attacking. One of the B-17s touches down on a golf course.

8.10am A bomb hits USS Arizona, setting off 450,000kg (1mn lb) of gunpowder and instantly destroying the ship, along with 1,177 crew on board.

8.12am USS Utah is scuppered.



8.54am The second wave of Japanese fighters arrives, attacking the dry dock and many other ships.

10am A third Japanese strike is rejected by superiors, believing the earlier attacks have done enough damage.

1pm The Japanese aircraft carriers head for home, with over 2,400 American soldiers left dead.





# The USA's Call to Arms

The attack was supposed to destroy American resolve;  
instead it inspired vengeance on an almighty scale

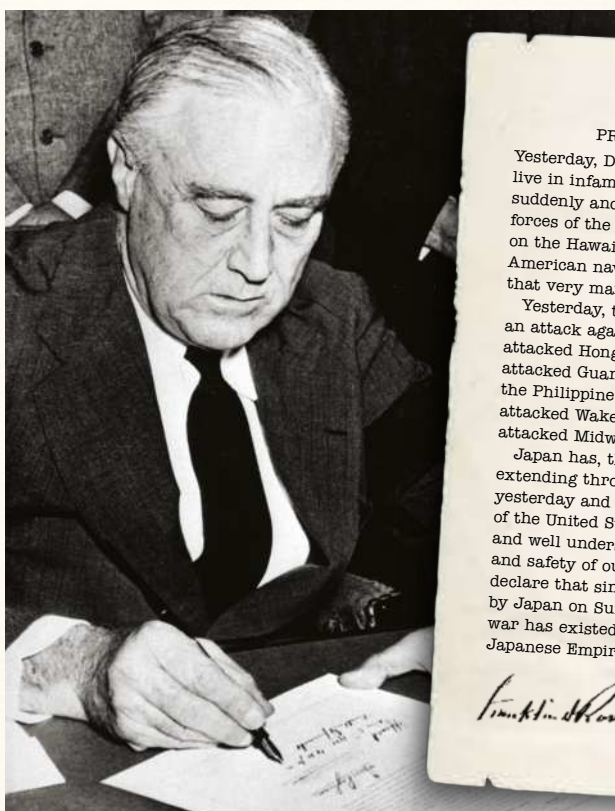
Words Nick Soldinger

**B**y 10am, the first Japanese aircraft began arriving back at their carriers, now lying just 300 kilometres north of Oahu, with the second wave of planes

following closely behind. Despite insistent pleas from Commander Fushida - who had led the first wave - to launch the third part of the assault, Admiral Nagumo decided against it. Unsure of the location of the American aircraft carriers, he was unwilling to risk it for fear of being spotted and attacked from the air, so he withdrew. The Japanese fleet retreated back into the vast blue expanse from which it had appeared just hours earlier.

On Hawaii, however, the local population were steeling themselves for an invasion as rumours of Japanese paratroop assaults and amphibious landings spread. At 12.30pm, the Honolulu Police Department raided the Japanese Embassy in the Hawaiian capital to discover diplomats busily burning documents. Meanwhile, government agents began raiding the homes of Hawaii's sizeable Japanese community, seizing domestic radio sets for fear that they might be used to communicate with Japanese forces in order to help coordinate further attacks. Later that day, after consulting with President Roosevelt over the phone, Hawaii's governor Joseph Poindexter declared Hawaii (not then a US state) be placed under martial law, handing full control of the island over to the American military.

Oahu, meanwhile, was a chaotic mess. The wreckage of burned-out aircraft littered airstrips, buildings - both military and civilian - were



left shattered and charred, while hospital staff struggled to cope with thousands of casualties. At Pearl Harbor, rescue workers toiled ceaselessly to save the lives of the 461 men trapped in the overturned Oklahoma. After hours of desperate attempts, just 32 sailors would eventually be pulled from the capsized battleship. The

following day, Roosevelt addressed a joint session of the United States Congress and delivered his famous speech (above).

Prior to the attack, the United States of America had been a divided nation. Still recovering from the aftershocks of the 1929 Wall Street Crash and the subsequent Great





Thousands of US citizens of Japanese origin were forced into internment camps after the attack

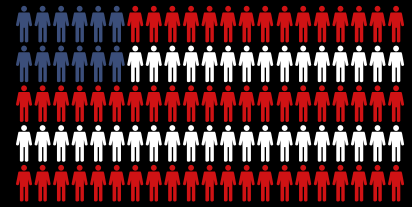


Depression, it now became galvanised. Overnight, opposition to American involvement in what was now clearly a world war evaporated as the country patriotically responded to the call to "Remember Pearl Harbor!" In fact just one member of the US House of Representatives voted against Roosevelt's appeal for Congress to declare war on Japan.

The United States' economy was switched into overdrive as it geared up to produce an overwhelming amount of arms and munitions for war. It was the birth of what would come to be known as the country's military-industrial complex.

Three days later, Japan's allies Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, and for the second time in less than a week, Congress again voted for war. More than two years after the start of hostilities, the United States had finally joined the fight that would consume the world.

## REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR IN NUMBERS



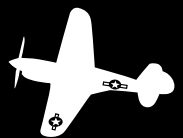
# 3,581

Americans were wounded at Pearl Harbor

# 68

civilians were killed in the raid

# 347



US aircraft were destroyed or damaged during the raid

# 29

Japanese planes were destroyed in the attack

# 32

out of the 461 sailors trapped in the hull of the capsized Oklahoma were saved

# 10

Japanese prisoner was taken

# 90

The attack lasted

minutes

# 19



American warships and auxiliary ships were destroyed or damaged during the attacks

# 5



Japanese mini subs also participated in the attack; four were destroyed and one captured





# The Bloodiest Battle in History

The outcome of WWII and the fate of the Third Reich was decided in the bloodied ruins of Stalingrad



The pivotal battle of World War II was fought in the Soviet city of Stalingrad. While not the most strategically vital location for either side, its very name

made it a point of obsession for both Hitler and Stalin. When the guns finally fell silent among the ruins in February 1943, over 1 million Wehrmacht and Soviet soldiers, not to mention innocent Soviet civilians, lay dead.

The idea of Stalingrad's capture began to germinate in Hitler's mind in April 1942, following the petering out of the Soviet counter-offensive that prevented the Wehrmacht taking Moscow. The objective was to take the city before racing on to secure the oilfields in the Caucasus beyond, simultaneously securing a vital supply for the German armies while

cutting off the Soviet's access to it. With the Soviet offensive at Kharkov defeated in May, the path to Stalingrad lay open.

As General Timoshenko's battered forces retreated in the face of two German panzer armies (the 17th under Ewald von Kleist and the 6th under Friedrich Paulus), a Stalingrad Front was declared by the Soviets, which they frantically raced to fill with reserve forces from Moscow. The race was on to adequately prepare the city for the German onslaught. But it would not just be the soldiers who would be required to defend Stalingrad.

Almost 200,000 Soviet civilians were mobilised and organised into workers columns to dig anti-tank ditches up to six feet deep while army sappers laid mines. Even schoolchildren were deployed to construct

earth walls around the precious petrol tanks along the Volga River. Anti-aircraft batteries were formed by young women, with guns situated on both banks of the Volga in order to defend vital positions such as the Beketavka power station and the infamous Tractor Factory, which had been converted to build the much-feared T-34 tanks. Every single pair of hands would be needed if total annihilation was to be averted.

Overall command of the operation to save Stalingrad fell to the ruthless General Vasily Chuikov. Notorious for his incredibly explosive temper, Chuikov worked tirelessly to raise the morale of his beleaguered troops while instilling terror into any commanders that dared to imagine retreat. Any deserters would be shot without hesitation.



Chuikov's approach to the perilous situation was simple: "Time is blood." The longer the coming battle raged, the more it would cost the Germans. Every obstacle was to be placed in their way. Even immobile tanks were dug into positions to provide fire. If Stalingrad was to be taken, it would be inch by blood-soaked inch.

## 'PEACE FOR OUR TIME'

Having battled across the Don River on 21 August, the Germans began their assault on Stalingrad on the 23 August even before they'd reached the Volga. Under the command of General von Richthofen, the entire 4th Air Fleet, comprising 1,200 aircraft (both Junkers 88 and Heinkel 111 bombers) headed for Stalingrad to ignite a biblical inferno. In a total of 1,600 sorties, Richthofen's pilots dropped approximately 1,000 tons of explosives, losing only three planes in the process.

Thousands of civilians died in the carnage, still in the city due to Stalin's refusal to evacuate them for fear of spreading mass panic. Wooden houses were reduced to ash as apartment blocks were either gutted or collapsed entirely. By indiscriminately carpet-bombing the entire city, the Luftwaffe hit the hospital, waterworks and telephone lines, as well as bombing the petrol tanks lining the river, sending flames 1,500 feet into the blackened sky.

With what was to become a lengthy bombardment now underway, the 16th Panzer Division surged across the steppe towards the city. Despite the valiant efforts of the anti-aircraft batteries, who rained 37mm shells down upon the invaders, the panzer crews

pressed on, aided by Stuka aircraft. By the afternoon of the 23rd, they had reached the Volga River.

Confident that such a pulverising would have broken the Soviets' will and ability to resist, the Germans anticipated a relatively swift victory. But in a dark twist of irony, they had actually helped to sow the seeds of their own downfall; the churned up remains of Stalingrad would prove to be a cramped killing field in which snipers and close-quarters fighting ruled. This was no place for the rapid, sweeping manoeuvres favoured by the Germans.

In the days that followed the terror bombing, General Hoth's forces slowly trudged forwards, pushing the Russian 64th Army back. Emboldened by the relatively weak Soviet resistance in the lead up to the assault, Paulus decided to send his men straight into the fray upon their arrival instead of allowing them to rest. As Germans fed into the streets, so did Soviet reinforcements.

The situation facing the Soviets was utterly dire – so desperate in fact, that as their men ran towards the enemy, machine gun posts were set up behind them. Their choice was clear: die fighting or die retreating. The fact that they had to rely on supplies shipped across the Volga under heavy German fire didn't help either.

Working in tandem with their pilot colleagues, the panzers continued to battle their way through the city, all the while conscious of the vulnerability of their tanks in the narrow streets. By 31 August the Germans were at the Stalingrad-Morozask railway. Paulus now firmly

believed that the Russian 62nd and 64th armies could be divided and finished off.

The arrival of Marshal Georgy Zhukov two days earlier had again revealed the scale of the task facing the Soviets. Morale was collapsing under the strain of



Sergeant Yakov Fedotovitch Pavlov became a hero after his platoon recaptured and aggressively defended 'Pavlov's House'

the aerial bombardment, with one divisional commander resorting to lining up his men and shooting every tenth one until his gun ran out. Just as the Soviets were preparing to unleash a counter-attack in an attempt to stem the panzer advance, Zhukov began imploring Stalin to delay it.

The marshal discovered the troops assigned to the job were poorly equipped, low on ammunition and predominantly made up of old reservists. Yet despite the obvious flaws in the Red Army, Stalin became increasingly nervous, citing the encroachment of German tanks as the reason that any delay could prove fatal. Zhukov did eventually succeed in gaining an extra two days, but they made little difference, for the advance that proceeded was short-lived.

## FIGHT BACK

The 1st Guards Army only managed to push on a few miles into the Russian steppe, while the 24th Army literally found itself back at square one, having totally failed to gain any ground. However, the attack had not been completely in vain; it had forced Paulus to divert his reserve





Pavlov's House became a symbol of Stalingrad's resistance to the bloody German assault

## DEFENDING PAVLOV'S HOUSE

The siege of Pavlov's House (named after Sergeant Yakov Pavlov, who contributed to its defence) cost the Germans dearly and became a symbol of the Red Army's will to resist.

Having retaken the four-storey building from the Germans, the soldiers of the 13th Guards Division positioned machine guns in every window and ringed the building with barbed wire and mines. They also discovered that an anti-tank gun on the roof of the building was too high up for enemy tanks to fire on.

Overlooking the Volga (from which supplies were brought to the house via a trench), the defenders had a clear view to the north, south and west for a kilometre. From 27 September to 25 November they managed to repel waves of German assaults until they were relieved by the Soviet reinforcements.



Bombing raids and their attendant firestorms left Stalingrad a pulverised ruin, but the city fought on

forces just as the shattered remains of the 62nd and 64th armies were pushed back to the perimeters of the city. The Germans had paid heavily, losing six battalion commanders in a single day and seeing many companies decimated, some left with just 40 men.

From grenades to Molotov cocktails, the Soviets used all available means. Many rushed into the fray without weapons, forced to wait until a comrade fell before taking their rifle. It's no surprise that the life expectancy for a soldier arriving in the city was less than 24 hours. With fewer than 40,000 fighters left to confront the 6th Army and 4th Panzer Army, the Germans believed that it was simply a matter of time before Stalingrad would fall.

Following a summit with Hitler in his Vinnitsa headquarters, Paulus unleashed the next major assault on 12 September. With yet another artillery bombardment and bombing attack having pounded the city beforehand, the Wehrmacht began to make progress, fighting their way towards the Mamayev Kurgan, a mound overlooking the Volga, also known as Hill 102 on account of its height in metres. Soldiers pressed on to the railway station as Hoth's panzer and infantry troops aimed for the grain elevator.

Stalin ordered that men be sent across the Volga to secure the west bank. The 13th Guards Division lined up to await the journey under German fire. Those that reached the bank leapt from the boats to rush the enemy, knowing that the slightest delay meant death. Close-quarter combat ensued as reinforcements poured in from both sides. The hill was strategically vital; its loss would allow the Germans to control the entire river, across which all of the Soviet supplies had to travel.

## Factories of Death

The further the Germans advanced, the stiffer the resistance they encountered. Every single building had to be fought for, with numerous tales of grossly outnumbered men holding out against wave upon wave of attacks. One of the most well-known examples is Pavlov's House, which is said to have cost the Germans more men than the entire thrust into France. In such encounters flamethrowers proved very effective, but it was the snipers, such

as the famed Vasily Zaitsev, who reigned supreme among the rubble. Appropriately, the German name for this merciless fighting was Rattenkrieg, or Rat War.

In early October the Germans began their assault on the factory district to the north of the city. Many of these installations, including the Red October Complex and the Tractor Factory, had been turned into fortresses, and they continuously changed hands. In some instances, the panzers resorted to ramming the buildings to gain entry.

The key positions were finally in German hands come the end of October, but the price paid for them was nothing short of catastrophic. The last heave of the attack had been curtailed by a rain of Katyusha and mortar fire. Just as winter approached the Wehrmacht found itself running out of steam, bled almost dry.

A final attempt at a decisive breakthrough came on 11 November. As the Luftwaffe obliterated the factory chimneys, infantry

## "As Germans fed into the streets, so did Soviet reinforcements"

### Defining Moment

#### Battle for the Mamayev Kurgan 12 September onwards

Aware that the loss of this strategically vital hill would hand the Germans total control of the Volga, Stalin orders troops be sent over to retake it. A bloody struggle for Hill 102 begins.



The hill overlooking the city had been of strategic importance as a line of defence for centuries

## TIMELINE

1942

23 August 1942

On the third anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Germans pulverise Stalingrad from the air, killing thousands of people.

23 August 1942

Such is the ferocity of the German assault, Hitler's forces gaze out over the Volga (not the buildings that used to block the view of it) by sunset.

31 August 1942

The Germans press on, fighting bitterly to reach the key railway line, forcing the desperate Soviets back.

September 1942

The Soviets launch a doomed counter-attack in early September, gaining little ground but sparing the remnants of their 62nd and 64th Armies from the German advance.

12 September 1942

Paulus begins a new offensive by pounding the city with artillery and aerial bombardments. His men then reach the Mamayev Kurgan.

4 October 1942

As the Germans continue their march further into the city, they reach the industrial district. Fighting erupts as the Soviets struggle to hold key buildings, including the Tractor Factory.

Mid October 1942

As the anniversary of the October Revolution nears, a cult of 'sniperism' begins to emerge with Vasily Zaitsev at its head. Zaitsev, who killed 225 enemy soldiers during the battle, begins to train young snipers.





German troops attempt to force their way through the battle-scarred city, but ultimately meet with failure

The air attacks on Stalingrad began on the third anniversary of the pact that should have prevented them

seized buildings from the enemy, only to relinquish them shortly after. Burning tanks littered Stalingrad's streets as the Soviets dug in, some down to their last rounds. Such was their determination, a band of 15 men held off a thrust towards the petrol tanks on the Volga. The tenacity of these courageous men led the Germans to believe that they were fighting "creatures". And it would be these seemingly superhuman warriors that would soon wreak an almighty revenge.

## DEFINING MOMENT

### Germans attempt final breakthrough

11 November

Running out of supplies and shattered by the fighting, Paulus attempts to finally end the battle. The Germans force their way forwards, taking many buildings from the Soviets but failing to deliver a knockout blow.

Thanks to the movement of industry back beyond the Volga, Soviet factories were continuing to produce an immense amount of weaponry; some estimates place monthly tank production, including the much-feared T-34, at 2,200. Hitler had underestimated his enemy's industrial capacity, and he genuinely thought they had exhausted themselves. This hubris made the thunderclap of Operation Uranus all the more stunning.

The supposedly spent Soviets had in fact been secretly amassing a gargantuan force with which to launch a staggeringly ambitious flanking attack of brutal simplicity. A main assault force would set off over 100 miles west of Stalingrad, while another horde of troops struck out from south of the Don River as an armoured thrust launched from the south. On the morning of 19 November, a huge Soviet bombardment opened fire as the

snow fell. The Germans, supported by Italian and Romanian troops, didn't know what hit them; the encirclement of the 6th Army had begun, and would culminate in its destruction. Hitler's refusal to allow Paulus' men to retreat, combined with Göring's insistence that the Luftwaffe could keep the entrapped soldiers supplied, cemented their doom. In the first days of February 1943, Stalingrad fell silent.

The horrific battle for the city is still the bloodiest in human history, and it bore witness to animalistic fighting. In the words of Winston Churchill, "Stalingrad was the end of the beginning". It proved to be a traumatic reversal from which the Wehrmacht never fully recovered. The Red Army would march for Berlin. With over two years of conflict ahead, the outcome of World War II had already been settled in the ruins of Stalin's city, the fate of Hitler's Third Reich permanently sealed.

**Late October 1942**  
After almost a month, the Germans finally have overall control of the area. However, Soviet defenders remain in the vicinity, with some of them even left inside the Tractor Factory.

**19 November 1942**  
With approximately 1 million men amassed over 100 miles from Stalingrad, the Soviets begin a huge encirclement operation, hoping to trap the Germans in the city and out on the steppe.

**21 November 1942**  
Paulus is horrified to hear that the approaching Soviet forces are now threatening both flanks of his 6th Army.

**21 November 1942**  
Paulus swiftly abandons his headquarters as Soviet tanks approach. General Walther von Seydlitz orders two infantry divisions to burn their supplies and retreat from Stalingrad.

**1943**  
**22 January 1943**  
With hope of a breakout fading fast, Hitler issues an order to the trapped 6th Army that "surrender is out of the question. Troops must fight on to the end".

**31 January - 2 February 1943**  
Paulus' trapped forces begin to surrender. Around 91,000 troops are taken into captivity; only 5,000 will ever make it back to Germany.





# The Taking of Normandy

Author and historian James Holland talks us through how the Allied invasion cemented its advantage despite unexpected setbacks

Words Jonathan Gordon



he liberation of France was not a foregone conclusion; everyone knew D-Day was coming, Americans, British, French,

and importantly the Nazis. For months the Allies had been working to misdirect and feed false reports of where the landing would happen, but it was inevitable.

What was less clear was how successful they would be. As James Holland, author of *Normandy '44* and *Big Week* (among many other titles) tells us, it was a one step at a time process. "The one priority of D-Day is to make sure that it doesn't fail, and that trumps absolutely everything," he insists. "And everyone's got terribly obsessed about D-Day targets and the fact that no one actually achieved what they were supposed to do on the invasion front."

What Holland is referring to is certain territorial targets that didn't get met, like US forces taking Carentan or British and Canadian troops taking Caen. Those things would come in the days and weeks that followed, but they didn't happen on day one. The German response to invasion was

slow and uneven, but the terrain was challenging. And whatever griping there may have been back in London or Washington, objective one of D-Day was achieved. "Everyone got inland, everyone got a toe hold, flanks were secured," explains Holland. "By anyone's reckoning, D-Day was an incredible success and they achieved tactical surprise."

Foothold established, the Allied 'Big War' approach could be applied, having led a vanguard of 150,000 troops and now following them up with every bit of medical, mechanical, logistic, aerial and naval support that they could muster. "What you've got is a race because the Allies have overwhelming material advantage," Holland tells us. "Of that there is absolutely no question. They've got millions of men back in the UK, hundreds of thousands of vehicles, thousands of tanks and guns and the airforce. But the limit to how much you can bring over in one go or even in two goes does matter because of the constraints of shipping." Could the Allies get these resources to mainland France from across the Channel before Germany could reinforce and mount a counterattack?

Thankfully, bombing raids all across France had already been decimating transportation links and communications, albeit in a rather spread out fashion so as not to give away that Normandy would be the point of entry. That slowed down a German response and then from D-Day onwards the Allies could be even more precise.

"Once D-Day arrives, the cat is out of the bag and then you no longer have to roam across a wide area to cover all bases and keep the enemy guessing. You now know it's going to be Normandy, so therefore you can focus on the approach roads to Normandy and any German troops heading to Normandy ... the moment they start moving in daylight they're going to be hammered by fighter bombers and bombers."

As an example of Allied success in this approach, 12 airfields were built from scratch in Normandy by Allied forces in the first two weeks of the invasion, massively cutting down on flight times for fighter bombers. All of this meant that the Allies were in charge of what would happen next in Normandy, but the German reaction was uncharacteristically lacking in pragmatism,





US infantry approach Omaha Beach across the English Channel, their guns protected from water



General Montgomery travelled with his pets as part of his mobile base. These are his dogs Hitler and Rommel

## People to know



**BERTRAM RAMSAY**  
Naval Commander in Chief

It took the intervention of Winston Churchill to bring Ramsay back to the navy after he retired in 1938, and he was put in charge of defending cross-Channel military traffic. He was later in charge of the Dunkirk evacuation and the Normandy invasion.

**ARTHUR TEDDER**  
Deputy Supreme Allied Commander

Tedder was Air Chief Marshall in the RAF when he joined the Supreme Command, Allied Expeditionary Force in January 1944 as deputy to Eisenhower. He had previously worked with him on the invasion of Sicily and Italy.

**DWIGHT D EISENHOWER**  
Supreme Allied Commander

Eisenhower had made a name for himself as a planner and organiser, rising through the ranks of the US armed services. He was responsible for overseeing and coordinating all of the armed forces involved in Operation Overlord.

**BERNARD MONTGOMERY**  
Ground Forces Commander in Chief

Despite being a divisive figure, Montgomery was nonetheless put in charge of the ground forces for D-Day and Operation Overlord. He planned the overall objectives for American, British and Canadian ground troops in Normandy.

**TRAFFORD LEIGH-MALLORY**  
Air Commander in Chief

Leigh-Mallory joined the planning for Normandy in August 1943. He was in charge of planning bombing raids to disrupt German reinforcements ahead of D-Day, later working in coordination with the army to support ground forces after the invasion.

making the situation increasingly fraught and attritional.

"The German response ranged from bizarre to genuinely pretty bad. If you're looking at how the Germans did, they couldn't have done much worse," is Holland's assessment. "There are some assumptions that are made before the campaign, before D-Day, which are based on previous experience of coming up against the Germans, which suggest that they will retreat in stages once you've established an initial foothold."

But Hitler had other ideas. "The difference is that Hitler decides that the Germans have to fight close to the coast, they've got to fight for every yard. On one level that makes no sense at all, because for most of the Normandy campaign they remained in range of offshore naval guns, so there's a whole range of firepower that they wouldn't have facing them if they went further inland." So instead of retreating in stages and giving up ground to the Allies quickly, the battle becomes much slower and dogged.

"Why everyone is generally a bit down on the Allied effort in Normandy is that it looks like they're not making much headway for the best part of June and July," says Holland. "In actual fact, they're doing really well because what they're

doing is they're grinding down those all-important panzer divisions as they're reaching the front and they're never giving them a chance to operate in a coordinated counterattack, which is where they're going to be at their most dangerous."

Despite mounting criticism at home, Eisenhower and Montgomery held things together and the soldiers on the ground showed their bravery. "The bottom line is that fighting in 1944 against an array of spectacularly violent and powerful weapons, whether German, American or British, is fraught with danger. The fact of the matter is you can have all of the fire support in the world, but your leading troops still have to take ground. They still have to get out of their fox holes, out of their places of camouflage and cover and advance across a field or across open ground and face the guns of the enemy. That is incredibly dangerous. Lots of people get wounded and killed and it is incredibly hard to make serious progress."



### JAMES HOLLAND

Historian, author and broadcaster

Holland is a World War II specialist whose recent books include *Normandy '44: D-Day and the Battle for France* and *Big Week: The Biggest Air Battle of War War Two*.

EXPERT BIO

## WHO WAS INVOLVED IN D-DAY?



### BRITISH EMPIRE

In charge of the 2nd Army landing at Gold Beach, Juno Beach and Sword Beach, as well as providing land, sea and air manpower.



### USA

Handled Omaha Beach and Utah Beach with additional air and sea support as well as being the key financial backer of the invasion.



### CANADA

14,000 Canadians stormed the beach at Juno along with 110 Canadian ships manned by 10,000 sailors.



### FRANCE

French paratroopers landed with British Special Air Service on D-Day with the rest of the 400,00 strong Free French army landing later.



### POLAND

Thousands of Polish soldiers had escaped after German occupation and now supported the landings on land and in the air.



### THE NETHERLANDS

The Dutch government in exile based in London supported the invasion with a number of motorised divisions and three ships.



### BELGIUM

Belgian pilots flew with the RAF and a special Section Belge was formed within the Royal Navy for more Free Belgians to serve.



### CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Also served in their own units within the RAF during D-Day with ground troops joining the invasion in the days and weeks that followed.



### DENMARK

The Danes primarily contributed to the invasion with their naval personnel on British Navy ships crossing the Channel.



### NORWAY

A number of Norwegian soldiers sought refuge in Britain and returned to the mainland as part of the British armed services.



### AUSTRALIA

Some 2,000 Australian pilots took part in D-Day along with 500 sailors in the fleet, followed by some ground support down the line.



### NEW ZEALAND

No formal divisions from New Zealand landed on D-Day, but there were pilots, infantry and specialists present as well as an official observer.



### LUXEMBOURG

Several Luxembourgers were part of the 1st Belgian Infantry manning artillery and landed with that group for the Battle of Normandy.





# D-Day to Paris

Some of the key moments that took the Allies from the beaches to the French capital

## 1 7 June 1944 Liberation of Bayeux

The small city of Bayeux becomes the first French city of its size to be liberated after D-Day when the 50th Northumbrian Division move in with minimal German resistance. Scouts had sat on the outskirts of Bayeux the night before having successfully landed on Gold Beach with the city representing an important strategic point on the road joining Caen and Cherbourg. General Kraiss had decided to pull back his men rather than face British forces, which also saved Bayeux from a planned bombing run. A week later, Charles de Gaulle stands in Bayeux and declares France is with the Allies and re-establishes the laws of the French Republic.

## 2 29 June 1944 Capture of Cherbourg

The Cotentin Peninsula and most particularly the deep water port at Cherbourg are of massive strategic importance to Allied forces once the initial landing in Normandy is accomplished. Securing that port and the peninsula as a whole would allow the rest of the invasion force of the Allies to land and for more resources to be brought into France. Fighting for the peninsula starts almost immediately with the US 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions landing at its base on 6 June. Having cut off lines for reinforcement, all-out attack on Cherbourg by the US begins 22 June, supported by heavy bombardment from nearby battleships. They are joined by British Commandos on 26 June, while the 79th Division captures Fort du Roule. The last of the harbour defences surrender on 29 June.

## 3 9 July 1944 Caen Airfield Captured

It is originally hoped that Caen will be captured before the end of the first day of fighting (some infantrymen even have folding bicycles to speed their progress), but slow going means that armoured support is held back and when the assault is restarted, the German defence is in place. Montgomery makes the call to hold for significant reinforcements, to have an overwhelming force take the town and secure the important airfield needed by the RAF. Operation Epsom starts on 25 June and ends on 1 July without success, but once the town is surrounded and hit hard from the air from 7 July, German defences finally began to give way. The town is liberated by 9 July and the last of the German resistance cleared by 19 July, securing an all-important location for the Allies moving forward.

## 6 25 August 1944 Liberation of Paris

With the German forces decimated in Normandy, the path to Paris is not exactly easy, but much clearer. The move on the French capital starts on 19 August with French Resistance forces leading uprisings and taking control of key locations around the city. The original plan for liberating France is focused around forcing German troops out rather than liberating Paris, since Hitler had threatened to raze the city if the Allies moved on it. Charles de Gaulle argues for the French citizens to be supported (perhaps also concerned about who would end up in control of the French liberation if his Free French Army weren't seen to be involved) and so his forces are supported by the Allies, including the Spanish Civil War veterans of the 9th Armoured Company in taking back the city, forcing the surrender of the German garrison by 25 August. A combination of the people of France and its exiled military come together to free the capital with the Allies, strengthening the narrative that 'One France' has risen to liberate itself.



Citizens of Paris took to the streets to welcome Charles de Gaulle and the Allies



4

## 18 July 1944 Saint-Lô

There's a reason why Saint-Lô becomes known as the 'The Capital of Ruins' after it is identified as an important crossroads for potential German reinforcements to arrive from Brittany. As a result, in the hopes of capturing the city swiftly it is bombarded on the evening of 6 June through to 7 June, which adds to further bombing as the US looks to take the city, leaving around 95 per cent of Saint-Lô in rubble. Thanks to the attritional nature of the fighting through Normandy's hedgerows, the XIX Corps of the 1st United States Army don't begin their approach until 15 July, coming in from the north and west. Further bombing from the Allies and Germans destroys even more of the city, but ultimately the Germans choose to retreat as they can no longer hold the area.

5

## 21 August 1944 The Falaise Pocket

The decisive battle of the liberation of Normandy is this gathering of Allied forces that traps German troops with only one, narrow route of escape out of the region if they hoped to survive. With Army Group B ordered not to retreat, it becomes trapped by British and Canadian troops coming south from Caen and American troops heading northeast - having cleared Saint-Lô and then moved south - starting on 12 August. The Canadians take Falaise on 17 August, by which time a German retreat is finally ordered, but the route of escape between Chambois and Saint Lambert is now only two miles wide. Polish battlegroups finally close the gap on 19 August, limiting further escape.

## BATTLE OF NORMANDY IN NUMBERS

156,000

TROOPS LANDED ON D-DAY



14,674

AIRCRAFT



13,000

PARATROOPERS

13,878

SHIPS

425,000

KILLED, WOUNDED OR MISSING FROM ALLIES AND AXIS

100,000

TONS OF SUPPLIES

6,603

US CASUALTIES

200,000

PRISONERS CAPTURED BY ALLIES



3,300

BRITISH CASUALTIES

850,000

MEN BY END OF JUNE

961

CANADIAN CASUALTIES

150,000

VEHICLES BY END OF JUNE

4,000-9,000

GERMAN CASUALTIES

326,000

ALLIED TROOPS WITHIN 5 DAYS OF D-DAY







# Liberating the Death Camps

As Allied soldiers advanced on Germany, they encountered the truth about the Holocaust in all its horror



Soviet soldiers come face to face with prisoners at Auschwitz



When I walked through the gates I saw the walking dead... human beings that'd been beaten, starved, tortured, denied everything that makes

life liveable. They were skin and bone with skeletal faces, and deep-set eyes. Their heads were clean shaven and many were holding onto each other just to stop from falling.

Many of them had sores on their body from malnutrition. One man held out his hands and his fingers had webbed together from the scabs from these sores. When they stumbled towards me I backed away and I said to myself, "What is this insanity? Who are these people? And what had they done to cause other people to treat them like this?"

This is the testimony of Sergeant Leon Bass, an African-American soldier who was among the first to reach Buchenwald concentration camp in April 1945. Bass' racially segregated unit was just one of many in the US, British and Soviet armies to encounter such sights as World War II reached its catastrophic climax.

Russian troops were the first to stumble upon the Third Reich's darkest secret when they reached Majdanek in Poland in July 1944. Surprised by the rapid Soviet advance, the Germans had attempted to demolish





When Allied soldiers arrived at Dachau, they didn't expect what they found

## "The Nazis had engaged in murder on an industrial scale"

the camp and destroy all evidence of the killings. The large crematorium used to burn bodies of victims was itself set on fire. The gas chambers - used to carry out the mass killings - were left standing, however. Later that summer, the Red Army also overran the sites of death camps at Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka, although they had been dismantled in 1943: with most of Poland's 3 million Jews already killed, they were no longer needed.

In January 1945, the Russians came across proof that the Nazis had engaged in murder on an industrial scale when troops overran Auschwitz in southwest Poland. One of six Nazi extermination camps, it was the last one still operating in the final months of the war. It was also the largest mass-murder site in human history, responsible for the slaughter of over 1.1 million people.

The fleeing Germans had forced the majority of Auschwitz's surviving prisoners

to march westward on what would become known as 'death marches'. But Soviet soldiers found more than 7,000 haunted, cadaverous prisoners still there clinging to life, who claimed to have witnessed unimaginable barbarism. Among the survivors were around 180 children who'd been subject to bizarre medical experiments by the camp's sadistic physicians, including the infamous Dr Mengele.

There was other evidence, too, of great wrongdoing. The Russians found warehouses filled with personal possessions - suitcases, spectacles, as well as seven tons of human hair - all of it once belonging to people who had now vanished, their

incinerated remains lost to the wind. How had this nightmarish place come to be, and what, as Bass had wondered, had these people done to deserve this fate?

The first concentration camp in Germany opened in 1933, just 15 days after Hitler came to power. Concentration camps were not new. So-called because they concentrated a large number of prisoners in a confined area, they'd been around since at least 1838 when used by the US government to intern Native Americans, and Germany had used them in Namibia before World War I. The

An American soldier gives cigarettes to liberated men at Dachau





first on home soil, however, was located in a disused factory in Dachau, Bavaria. Originally established to hold 5,000 prisoners deemed a threat to the new regime, it was initially populated by political prisoners. As the Nazi regime spread, however, they were soon joined by others: gay people, Jehovah's Witnesses, Roma, and - from 1935 onwards with the passing of the anti-Semitic Nuremberg Laws - a vast number of Jews.

As war approached, more camps appeared throughout Germany: Sachsenhausen was established in 1936, Buchenwald in 1937, Flossenbürg in 1938, Bergen-Belsen a year later. With the invasion of Poland in September 1939 came access to new land where the Nazis could build even bigger complexes away from the gaze of the German public. It's thought that between 1933 and 1945, the Nazis established around 40,000 camps and incarceration centres. Many were used to simply supply the regime with a huge army of slave labourers, or to detain prisoners of war scooped up in various blitzkriegs. Others like Auschwitz, however, evolved into institutions specifically dedicated to the business of mass murder.

Originally constructed in May 1940 for Polish prisoners of war, Auschwitz soon expanded to house political prisoners and other 'undesirables'. It was initially a labour camp but with the drafting of the Final Solution to the Jewish Question in January 1942, when the extermination of Europe's Jewish population became official state policy, it was transformed into the most notorious killing centre in the Nazi system.

While gas chambers and crematoria weren't uncommon elsewhere, the vast Auschwitz complex had eight gas chambers and 46 ovens - capable of disposing of 42,000 people a



The liberation of Dachau saw much celebration

week. It was here that the use of Zyklon B was pioneered. Ushered into gas chambers on the pretext that they were communal showers, inmates were then locked in and the Zyklon B pellets poured in by SS guards through chutes in the wall. These pellets would vaporise when exposed to air, releasing cyanide gas. This highly efficient murder method had been dreamt up by SS Captain Karl Fritzsch, deputy

to the camp's commander, Rudolf Höss, while conducting experimental executions of Soviet POWs in late August 1941.

The discovery of Auschwitz was to prove the most heinous example of how far Hitler's Holocaust had gone, but it wasn't the last. In the months following the camp's liberation, the Soviets overran others in Poland, the Baltic States and eventually in Germany itself. In the West, meanwhile, advancing US forces liberated further German camps. Buchenwald was overrun on 11 April, 1945, resulting in more than 20,000 prisoners being freed. Others followed in quick succession at Dora-Mittelbau, Flossenbürg, Mauthausen and Dachau on 29 April. By then it had borne witness to nearly 32,000 murders.

British forces, meanwhile, liberated camps across northern Germany, including Bergen-Belsen on 5 April 1945. Here they discovered around 60,000 prisoners, most of whom were critically ill due to a typhus epidemic. More



An aerial view of Auschwitz, taken by the RAF

## • Auschwitz-Birkenau Extermination Camp, Poland

By far the biggest camp in the Nazi prison system, it was staffed by 7,000 SS troopers. Notable inmates included Anne Frank, novelist Primo Levi, and Nobel Prize-winner Imre Kertész.

27 January 1945



## LIBERATION OF THE CAMPS

1944

### • Majdanek

Extermination Camp, Poland

The speed of the Soviet advance meant the Nazis had no time to destroy Majdanek. It was the first proof of industrialised killing. It's thought 78,000 perished within its walls.

22 July 1944

### • Belzec

Extermination Camp, Poland

Belzec was overrun by the Red Army in the summer of 1944. By this time, however, the camp there had been dismantled, having claimed an estimated 600,000 lives.

July 1944

### • Treblinka,

Extermination Camp, Poland

One of six extermination camps in the Nazi prison system, Treblinka was also destroyed before the Soviets reached it. As many as 900,000 may have been murdered there.

July 1944

### • Sobibor,

Extermination Camp, Poland

The Soviets overran the site of this death camp in late summer 1944. The camp had been closed the previous year after a revolt by inmates - approximately 250,000 people were killed there.

August 1944

### • Natzweiler-Struthof Concentration Camp, France

Liberated by troops from the French First Army, this camp had housed 52,000 inmates and witnessed 22,000 murders. SS Major August Hirt kept a 'Jewish skeleton collection' at the camp.

23 November 1944

1945

### • Chelmno

Extermination Camp, Poland

Although operational until shortly before the Soviets overran the area, the Nazis again destroyed this death camp to get rid of evidence of their crimes. As many as 340,000 were exterminated here.

17 January 1945





American soldiers look over the bodies of inmates who had been killed during the evacuation of Ohrdruf camp

## "The discovery of Auschwitz was to prove the most heinous example"

than 10,000 of them died within weeks of being freed.

Even more tragic, however, was the fate of the prisoners at Neuengamme near Hamburg. On 26 April, about 10,000 inmates were loaded onto four prison ships anchored in Lübeck Bay in the Baltic Sea. On 3 May, operating under information that they were filled with SS troops bound for Norway, three squadrons of RAF Typhoons attacked the

unarmed vessels, sinking three of them. As the terrified survivors tried to swim for shore, the RAF pilots strafed the waters with machine gun fire until all movement ceased. The British troops who rolled in shortly afterwards were greeted by the ghostly sight of what appeared to be thousands of skeletons washing up on the shore. The war came to an end just five days later.



Glasses belonging to deceased victims of the Holocaust



The infamous Auschwitz gates

### ● Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp, Germany

When it was liberated by the Red Army, just 3,000 inmates remained - the other 33,000 had been forced on a death march by their SS guards just days before.

22 April 1945

### ● Ravensbrück Concentration Camp, Germany

Perhaps as many as 117,000 perished at this camp which housed mostly female inmates, many of them children. Less than 3,500 survivors were discovered by the Red Army upon liberation.

30 April 1945

### ● Bergen-Belsen, Concentration Camp, Germany

When liberated, troops from the British 11th Armoured division encountered 13,000 unburied corpses lying around the camp. 50,000 people are believed to have died there in total.

15 April 1945

### ● Flossenbürg, Concentration Camp, Germany

Shortly before its liberation, Flossenbürg witnessed a wave of executions. Among the victims were 13 British agents, seven German officers who'd plotted to kill Hitler, and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

23 April 1945

### ● Dachau Concentration Camp, Germany

Just three days before US troops liberated the original Nazi concentration camp, 10,000 of its inmates were forced to march south towards Austria. More than 1,000 died on the way.

29 April 1945

### ● Neuengamme Concentration Camp, Germany

Liberated by the British, this camp operated an extermination-through-labour policy. Around 42,900 inmates are believed to have succumbed to a mix of hard labour, disease, insufficient nutrition and inhumane treatment.

4 May 1945

### ● Mauthausen-Gusen Concentration Camp, Austria

As many as 320,000 may have perished here before the US army liberated it. One survivor was Simon Wiesenthal, who spent the rest of his life hunting Nazi war criminals.

5 May 1945

### ● Stutthof Concentration Camp, Poland

By the time Soviet forces liberated Stutthof, just 100 prisoners remained. Many of the 50,000 removed beforehand had been marched to the Baltic Sea, forced into the water and gunned down.

9 May 1945





# Germany's Home Front

Daily life in Nazi Germany during World War II  
was tough and, by the end, nearly unbearable

Words Edoardo Albert



Maria Kosulski was excited. She was getting married. Inside her belly she could feel the first stirrings of new life, but nothing showed on the outside yet. Her mother was there, and her mother-in-law. On the table in front of them were flowers, a copy of *Mein Kampf* and, on the wall behind the table, a photo of Hitler himself. The mayor, who was celebrating the marriage, began the short speech before getting down to the formalities of entering Maria's name in the registry alongside that of her beloved Otto. Maria glanced to the seat beside her; it was empty apart from an army helmet. Otto was serving on the Eastern Front.

Ferntrauung marriages - that is, marriages by proxy - were instituted by the Germans during the Polish campaign in the earliest part of the war, but they became steadily more common as the fighting wore on. With the men serving in the Wehrmacht rarely being given home leave, these marriages served to ensure that many children, who would otherwise have been illegitimate, were recorded as being born to a married couple. The new law dispensed with the age-old requirement that the engaged couple make their vows to each other: the bride generally made her profession to the mayor or another civic official, the groom to his company commander. Many marriages were also conducted posthumously, the groom having died on active service.

Maria eventually gave birth to a daughter, whom she named Hilde, but Otto never saw his daughter, nor even his wife following their long-distance marriage. He was killed on the Eastern Front a week after his wedding.

That such a law should have been passed so early in the conflict shows that the Nazi state

was already turning its mind to the prosecution of total war. The civilian population had been put on rationing on 1 September 1939, although throughout the latter part of the 1930s food production and consumption had been geared towards a siege economy. When Britain declared war following the German invasion of Poland in September, the Royal Navy began a naval blockade that, while having little immediate effect on food supplies, did restrict German access to oil imports.

The first stage of rationing saw the supply of meat, butter, cheese, milk, jam and sugar restricted, followed by eggs and bread on 25 September. But it wasn't just food that was rationed; clothing followed in October. To purchase an item of clothing the buyer had to produce their Reichskleiderkarte, which was valid for a year and came with 100 points. A new skirt cost 45 points, stockings four points. With such restricted means, people had to learn how to mend and patch. Nazi women's organisations put on demonstrations and ran courses on a range of topics and skills, from physiology to child welfare, with the courses on renovating furniture and tailoring old dresses into new ones being particularly popular.

For many Germans, rationing brought back unhappy memories of the Great War, so the start of this new conflict was not greeted with the sort of jubilation that had heralded World War I. The army had overrun Czechoslovakia and Austria - despite the protests of Britain and France - without any consequences, so many citizens hoped that the same would hold true when the tanks rolled into Poland. But on Sunday 3 September 1939, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain declared Britain to be at war with Germany.



# *Der Feind sieht Dein Licht!*



This poster warned citizens that, "The enemy sees your light! Blackout!" Approximately 410,000 Germans died as a result of Allied bombings



Germany's rapid conquest of France in the summer of 1940 led many at home to believe the war would soon be over

**"All knew too well the reality of war in terms of sons, fathers and uncles leaving and never returning"**





The response of the German population was sober. All knew too well the reality of war in terms of sons and fathers and uncles leaving and never returning, but World War I, fought in the trenches of France and Belgium, had largely spared Germany itself from the full horrors. In the aftermath of the swift victory over Poland, it must have seemed that the Fatherland would remain untouched in this new war too.

Indeed, the conquest of Poland allowed the Nazi state to further pursue its military, economic and social policies. While the country was gearing towards total war, Nazi ideology also preferred women to remain as homemakers and mothers, producing the next generation of pure Aryan stock. So while German women did increasingly go to work, the relative number of women employed in the war effort never reached the levels seen in Britain, where they came to form the backbone of production and distribution, from agriculture through to manufacturing and the civil service. To ensure the purity of the German racial stock, the German government preferred to use forced labour from occupied countries, as well as those people the state regarded as undesirable.

While rationing meant that the first Christmas of World War II passed with poor presents and meagre fare, Goebbels and other government bigwigs ensured they were photographed handing out toys to children: Santa Clauses in Nazi uniform. The toys all had swastikas printed on them. Among the toys and games for sale for Christmas was a Hitler Youth puppet with a right arm that could make the Nazi salute, and the parlour game Jews Out!

The winter of 1939-40 was severe - the worst for a century - and with coal in short supply, many Germans shivered through January and February 1940. Coal was short because much of it was being turned into a petrol substitute to fuel the Wehrmacht: the Royal Navy blockade was beginning to bite. But it wasn't just coal that was hard to come by: soap was, too. The ration was a three-ounce bar of soap a month. With unwashed people confined together for warmth, the smell often became overpowering, and the stench was exacerbated by shortages of toothpaste, creating a pungent miasma of body odour and bad breath.

The blackout, imposed to prevent British or American bombers navigating to illuminated German cities, produced a huge spike in road-traffic accidents. Pedestrians took to wearing white gloves or sewing phosphorous buttons to coats in an effort to ensure that drivers, whose headlights were painted over apart from slits, could see them. In the darkness crime and prostitution thrived, although the cold made for difficult working conditions for the streetwalkers.

Spring saw the swift German conquests of Denmark and Norway, although the hoped-for bounty of Norwegian fish and Danish bacon never appeared on German tables. But then, on

## FIRESTORM DRESDEN

**The Allied bombing campaign reached an apocalyptic crescendo over one German city**

It was like the end of the world. Dresden had passed relatively untouched by the Allied bombing campaign through to February 1945. Its residents might have hoped that they would escape the war's horrors, but on the night of 13-14 February, 1,300 RAF bombers turned it into hell.

The city's anti-aircraft defences had been requisitioned for the Eastern Front, leaving Dresden unprotected. Then the bombs came - incendiaries that unleashed a cumulative firestorm that raged through the Medieval city, razing everything in its path.

Even in their air raid shelters many died, suffocated by the flames sucking all the oxygen from the underground refuges. Others simply burned. One eyewitness described seeing "fire everywhere, everywhere fire, and all the time the hot wind of the firestorm threw people back into the burning houses they were trying to escape from".

While for the residents of Dresden the raids were a horror, for others they were retribution. A British prisoner of war who was detailed to help with the relief efforts after the raid spoke of his delight at what he saw. "Walking through Dresden and seeing all the destruction gladdened my heart considerably. It was a real morale booster. The bastards had got a taste of their own medicine."



Rescue workers move through the dead bodies following the bombing of Dresden

10 May, the Wehrmacht launched its assault on France, striking through Belgium. The Phoney War was over, and within days it was clear that this war would be nothing like its predecessor.

By 25 June, France had fallen. Hitler forced the defeated French to sign surrender terms in the same old railway carriage that had witnessed the surrender of the Kaiser's Reich 22 years before, and the next day Adolf Hitler entered Paris as its conqueror. For home critics of the Nazi regime, this extraordinary success was a disaster; it seemed that everything Hitler did worked. Emboldened, the Nazi state moved to stifle dissent further, cracking down on Christian churches and organisations and arresting dissenters: the Priest Barracks at Dachau concentration camp was where many of these clerics ended up. Of 2,720 clerics put in prison, 2,579 were Catholic priests.

The conquest of France, and the consequent shipping of much of its best produce to Germany, eased the rigours of rationing for the German people. With most families having men serving in the armed forces, soldiers' parcels home became among the most welcome items in the post. With only Britain remaining to stand against Germany, surely an end to the war must be in sight?

It didn't work out that way. The Battle of Britain proved to be the first failure of the German armed forces, and an RAF bombing raid on Berlin itself proved to the population that the war could be brought to them in their homes, just as the German armed forces were visiting it upon their enemies. With strict rationing in force, Christmas 1941 was a miserable affair, made more so by an air raid on Berlin on 21 December that killed 53 people. It was the first taste of much worse to come.

Among the many shortages, there was a chronic lack of cigarettes. The outbreak of war had brought a marked increase in tobacco consumption, but the Nazi Government was the





first anti-smoking regime in history, banning smoking on trams, buses and local trains. Hitler himself, as well as being a vegetarian, was a strict non-smoker at a time when most adults weren't.

On 22 June 1941 the war took arguably its most dramatic turn when 3 million troops rolled into the USSR at the start of Operation Barbarossa. Early expectations of quick success slowly withered in the face of the casualties coming home, and death notices began to fill the newspapers, although the regime soon restricted the space that could be devoted to such morale-sapping advertisements. The government also outlawed the wearing of mourning black, lest the losses the army was suffering become too obvious to those back home, while a nationwide appeal was launched for winter clothing to be sent out to the troops in the USSR. This led to members of the Wehrmacht wearing some decidedly non-military winter clothing, including furs and woollen pom-pom caps.

On 11 December 1941 the war grew even wider, with Germany declaring itself at war with the United States of America. The winter was again harsh, and 1942 saw rations reduced further. Public grumbling in the face of continuing war and austerity was met by a government politeness campaign and assurances that victory in the USSR was near. However, the offices of the Auslandsbriefprüfstelle (mail censor) struggled to cope with the increasingly bleak news being sent home by soldiers engaged in the apocalyptic struggle for Stalingrad. Although the front-line soldiers knew that anything too despairing would be blacked out by the censors, with over 700 million letters being sent through the military post each month, news filtered through. For many wives in Germany, these letters were the last contact they would ever have with their husbands.

Even the press, for a long time primed to deliver only news of victory, began to prepare the public for what was to come, peppering reports with stirring phrases of heroic resistance and ultimate sacrifice. Armies that are winning need neither. The announcement of defeat at Stalingrad finally came on 3 February 1943.

By 1944, the war was coming home to Germany in earnest. A Swiss student by the name of Rene Schindler who was travelling

through the country recorded his observations in his diary: mountains of uncollected rubbish, millions of homeless people, new addresses left chalked on the bombed-out remains of their old houses and, everywhere, rats.

Following the successful D-Day landings, and with the Soviet Union mounting a rolling series of offensives on the Eastern Front, Joseph Goebbels was made Reich Plenipotentiary for Total Warfare with the express duty to put every facet of the state into the service of the war. In the Reich's last stand there would be only bloodshed. All theatres and cultural institutions were closed, with the exception of cinemas, and artists and creatives who had previously been exempt from military service were sent to the rapidly retreating front lines. Postal deliveries were cut to one a day, phones disconnected apart from those used by the military, and working hours lengthened further.

The German occupation of the USSR had been unspeakably brutal. The advancing Red Army visited vengeance upon the German people, in particular unleashing mass rape upon German women. Estimates vary, but upwards of 1 million women were raped, some repeatedly. One survivor reported many years later being raped twice a day for seven days, each time by more than one soldier. But for many of the Red Army, this was justified vengeance for the crimes that Germany had committed in their homelands.

The German state and its economy was collapsing. In a final effort to find men to fight, Himmler raised the Volkssturm, an army of schoolchildren and pensioners armed with little more than Panzerfäuste and rifles. Those who could fled westwards, away from the Red Army and the increasingly frantic violence of the last vestiges of the Nazi regime. Hitler retreated into his bunker on 16 January 1945 and gave his final radio broadcast on 30 January.

The Reich was shrinking, almost to nothing. But even to the end, many Berliners responded to the call to provide spades and clothes for what remained of the army. Others, however, began to prepare for the arrival of the enemy, stockpiling food, preparing boltholes and rehearsing alibis.

On 30 April 1945, Adolf Hitler committed suicide. His death broke the final spell. The Volkssturm abandoned their weapons and the

## GACKED-OUT GERMANS

**How a little white pill fuelled the German military and its civilian population**

They were supposed to be Aryan supermen, but the reality of German troops often fell far short of this. To amp them up, the Wehrmacht issued amphetamine pills to troops. Pervitin came in little blue-and-red vials with a screw-on lid, and it soon found its way onto the home front.

The drug, which was completely legal, had been patented by pharmaceutical company Temmler in 1937 and, being cheaper than coffee, quickly became popular. With workers being required to do 70-hour weeks, the little white pick-me-up pills seemed ideal: a way to keep going when your concentration was failing and you could barely keep your eyes open.

As for the Wehrmacht, it shipped 35 million of the little tubes to troops and pilots in May 1940 alone. The tank men called it Panzerschokolade ('tank chocolate'); for the pilots they were Stuka tabletten ('Stuka pills'). But Pervitin was basically legal – indeed government-prescribed – crystal meth. The side effects, which included psychosis and attacks on officers, were so horrendous that the Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe tried to restrict its use after 1940, to little effect.

As for the general population, the little pills, and their drug-induced euphoria, were a way of enduring the unendurable. Perhaps one reason that some Germans fought on for so long was that so many of them were amped-up to the eyeballs.



The little white pills that fuelled the German war effort came in cheerful blue-and-red containers

last remnants of the 1,000-year Reich collapsed. The war had killed 5.25 million Germans and wounded 4 million more. There were 1 million war widows and 1.5 million orphans. The country was overrun and Berlin was in ruins. It was over.



Dachau Concentration Camp was the first such camp to be opened by the Nazis





A homeless German family struggle through the ruined streets of Jüchen in western Germany following its capture by American troops in 1945

Images Getty Images, Jan Welton C. (B)/S.A. 3.0 (Pervin/continen)





# The Battle for Berlin

Amid the rubble of the Nazi capital, the Soviet Red Army brought Hitler's Third Reich to a violent end

==== Words Michael Haskew =====







By the spring of 1945, World War II was in its sixth year. The once mighty war machine of the Third Reich had been brought to its knees. Assailed from both east and west, Nazi Germany was in its death throes.

Since the beginning, Allied forces had been buoyed by the cry, "On to Berlin!" Now, however, practical considerations weighed heavily on the conduct of the final weeks of the war. General Dwight D Eisenhower, supreme commander of the American and British armies advancing across the western German frontier, breached protocol and contacted Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin directly, informing him that the Western Allies did not intend to fight for Berlin. For several reasons, both political and military, the battle for the Nazi capital and whatever wisps of glory might come with its capture would be left to the Soviet Red Army.

Indeed, since Hitler had launched Operation Barbarossa - the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union - on 22 June 1941, the Soviets had suffered mightily and borne the brunt of the fighting in Europe continent. Millions of Soviet military and civilian lives had been lost before the Nazi juggernaut was even stemmed only 20 kilometres from Moscow, the Soviet capital.

German generals peered at the gleaming onion domes of the Moscow's buildings, but they couldn't get any closer. Winter set in, and the Germans literally froze to death, while

weapons and equipment failed to function in such inhospitable conditions.

The following spring, a renewed German offensive was met by a resurgent Red Army, and then the great Soviet victories at Stalingrad and Kursk occurred in 1943. Seizing the initiative, the Soviets pushed the Germans west across thousands of kilometres, reaching Warsaw, the Polish capital, in the summer of 1944. Soviet offensives from Leningrad in the north to Odessa in the south were known as 'Stalin's ten blows'. By early 1945, East Prussia, the Baltic States and Pomerania were in Soviet possession. The Red Army advanced from the River Vistula to the River Oder, and then to within 60 kilometres of Berlin.

## THE SOVIETS TURN WEST

On 1 April, Stalin and two of his top commanders, Marshal Georgi Zhukov of the 1st Belorussian Front and Marshal Ivan Konev of the 1st Ukrainian Front, met at the Kremlin in Moscow. "Who will take Berlin?" Stalin asked. "We will!" Konev answered. Stalin proceeded to give the two commanders their orders. Zhukov was to attack Berlin from the north and east, while Konev approached from the south. The two immense Fronts would surround Berlin in a giant pincer and destroy the opposing forces in an ever-shrinking defensive perimeter.

Two weeks later, the final offensive began with the thunder of thousands of Soviet guns. Konev's advance across the River Neisse gained ground steadily, but Zhukov failed to accurately assess the strength of the main German line of resistance

## NEARING BERLIN

20 April 1945 was Hitler's 56th birthday, but there was little revelry in the Führerbunker beneath the Reich Chancellery in Berlin that day. Soviet long-range artillery began shelling the capital, and the guns would not cease firing until the city had fallen. Word reached the Führer in his subterranean command centre that three defensive lines east of Berlin had been breached, including Seelow Heights. Zhukov was advancing. Konev was in open country and moving steadily with the 4th Guards Tank Army and 3rd Guards Army leading the way. A third Red Army Front, the 2nd Belorussian under Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky, had broken through the 3rd Panzer Army's lines. Inside Berlin, the remnants of Army and Waffen-SS units prepared makeshift defences. Old men and boys joined these soldiers for a fight to the death once the Soviets entered the city.

Territorial gains finally brought Berlin within range of field artillery on 22 April. A Red Army news correspondent came upon several guns preparing to unleash a storm of shells on the German capital, and he later wrote, "What are the targets?" I asked the battery commander. 'Centre of Berlin, Spree bridges, and the northern Stettin railway stations,' he answered. Then came the tremendous words of command: 'Open fire on the capital of Fascist Germany.' I noted the time. It was exactly 8.30am on 22 April. 96 shells fell on the centre of Berlin in the course of a few minutes."

## "As the Soviet noose tightened around Berlin, probing attacks tested the city's defences"

before Berlin at Seelow Heights just west of the Oder, where elements of Army Group Vistula, outmanned and outgunned but full of fight and Nazi fervour, made a stand along a ridgeline. Under the command of Colonel General Gotthard Heinrici, the defenders pulled back from frontline positions just as the Soviet artillery bombardment erupted; therefore, most of the shelling failed to inflict heavy casualties. German tanks and tank-killing infantry squads saw the silhouettes of Red Army armoured vehicles and troops illuminated by their own searchlights and took a fearful toll, stalling Zhukov's advance.

After four days of fierce fighting, Zhukov broke through the Seelow Heights defences, but the cost was high. No fewer than 30,000 Red Army soldiers were dead, along with 12,000 German troops. Stalin was enraged by the delay and ordered Konev to abandon his wider swing around Berlin and send his armoured spearheads directly towards the city. The existing rivalry between Zhukov and Konev became heated as they vied for the prestige of capturing Berlin.

Both Zhukov and Konev ordered a continued westward advance, and on 25 April, the leading elements of a Guards rifle regiment from the 1st Ukrainian Front made contact with troops of the US 69th Infantry Division at Torgau on the River Elbe, splitting the Third Reich in two. On the same day, the encirclement of Berlin was completed. Both the German 9th and 4th Panzer Armies were surrounded, and efforts by the 12th Army under General Walther Wenck to move to the relief of Berlin were thwarted by the westward movement of the 1st Ukrainian Front.

## DEFENDING THE DOOMED

As the Soviet noose tightened around Berlin, probing attacks tested the city's defences. The Germans had divided three concentric rings into nine sectors; about 96.5 kilometres in circumference, the outermost ring ran across the outskirts. Flimsy at best, it was mainly roadblocks, barricades of rubble and vehicles, and shallow trenches. It was compromised in numerous locations prior to the main assault on the city.



Russian soldiers gather in front of the Brandenburg Gate after the fall of Berlin



The second circle ran approximately 40 kilometres and made use of existing buildings and obstacles, including the S-Bahn, Berlin's public transportation railway system. The inner ring included the massive buildings that once housed the ministries and departments of the Nazi government. These were turned into machine-gun and anti-tank strongpoints with firing positions on each floor.

Six massive flak towers, studded with guns and virtually impervious to anything but a direct hit, were also part of the inner circle. Eight of the pie-shaped dividing sectors, labelled A through H and radiating from the centre of Berlin, crossed each of the rings to the outer perimeter. The ninth sector, named Z, was manned partially by a fanatical contingent of Hitler's personal SS guard.

The city of Berlin itself comprised 547 square kilometres, and defensive positions along the barriers of the River Spree and the Landwehr and Teltow Canals were particularly fortified. The main objective of the converging Soviet forces was the complex of government buildings known as the Citadel, north and east of the Tiergarten, a large park and residential district that was home to the Berlin Zoo.

Estimates of German strength vary from roughly 100,000 to 180,000, including SS, Army, Volkssturm (People's Militia) and Hitler Youth, under the command of General Helmuth Weidling, appointed by the Führer on 23 April to lead the last-gasp defence.

On 26 April, the final chapter of the battle for Berlin began with a fury. The 8th Guards and 1st Guards Tank Armies fought their way through the second defensive circle, crossing the S-Bahn line and attacking Tempelhof Airport. To the west, elements of the 1st Belorussian Front entered Charlottenburg and drew up to the River Spree after two days of bitter combat. The Soviets advanced inexorably toward the centre of Berlin on four primary axes, along the Frankfurter Allee from the southeast, Sonnenallee from the south toward the Belle-Alliance-Platz, again from the south toward the Potsdamer Platz, and from the north toward the Reichstag, where the German Parliament had once convened and which had not been in use since a devastating fire had gutted the building in 1933.

On 28 April, the Potsdamerstrasse Bridge across the Landwehr Canal was taken, and fighting spread into the Tiergarten. The next morning the 3rd Shock Army crossed the Moltke Bridge over the River Spree. The Reichstag lay to the left fronting the Königsplatz, which was mined and heavily defended by machine-gun nests, artillery, several tanks, and a mixed bag of roughly 6,000 Germans. Attacks on the Interior Ministry building progressed sluggishly, and by dawn on 30 April, Red Army soldiers occupied Gestapo headquarters on Prinz Albrechtstrasse for a brief time before a heavy counterattack pushed them out. The Soviets did capture most of the diplomatic quarter that day.



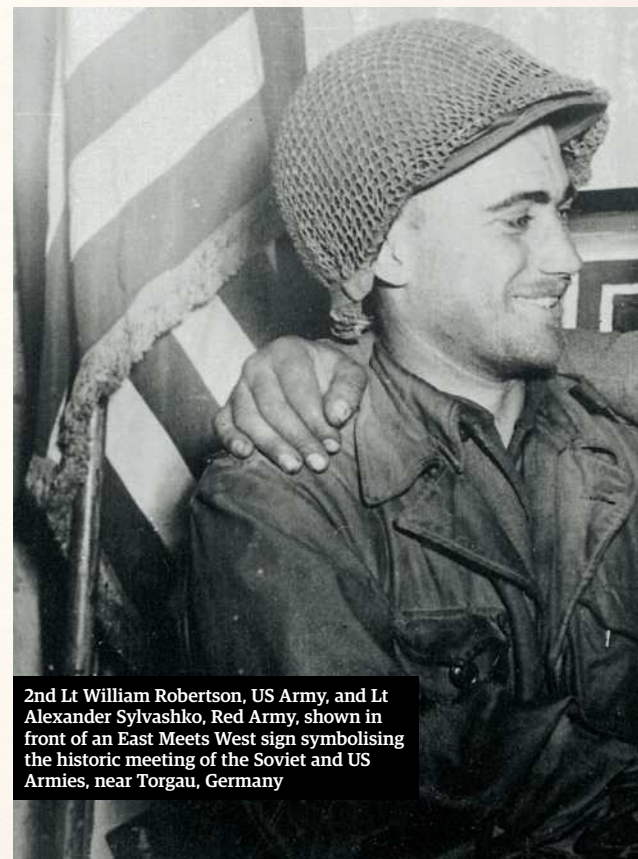
In this July 1945 photo, a heavily damaged street near the Unter den Linden in the centre of Berlin remains devastated



Meanwhile, the 79th Rifle Corps began a concerted effort to take the Reichstag. Troops of the 150th Rifle Division ran a gauntlet of fire across the Königsplatz in a frontal assault. Other divisions attacked the flanks of the large building, and three attempts were beaten back between 4.30am and 1pm. The defenders were aided by 128mm guns atop one of the reinforced concrete flak towers at the Berlin Zoo firing from over a kilometre away. Soviet tanks and self-propelled assault guns lumbered into the Königsplatz to blast German positions.

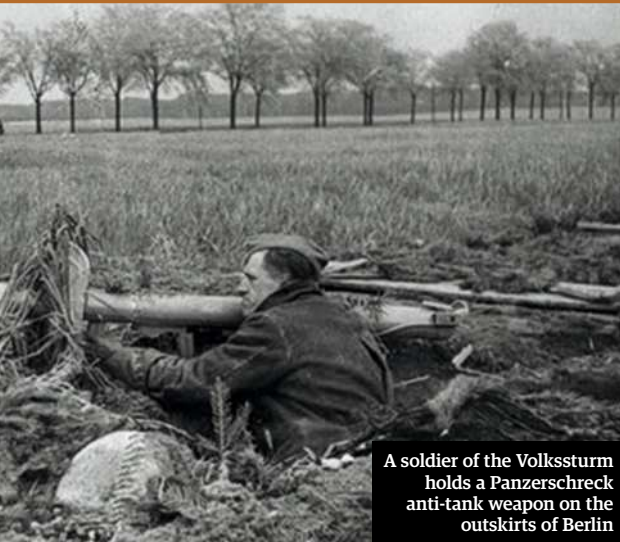
A false report that a red banner had been seen flying above the Reichstag was issued at mid-afternoon when the attackers had managed to advance only partially across the Königsplatz. Fearing the repercussions that might ensue if the report were found to be inaccurate, Major General VM Shatilov, commanding the 150th Rifle Division, ordered a redoubling of the effort.

By 6pm, the fight for the Reichstag had raged for 14 hours. Soviet soldiers renewed the attack, carrying small mortars to blast open entryways that had been covered with brick and mortar. Once inside, the Soviets clashed with Germans in hand-to-hand combat throughout the building. A small group of Red Army



2nd Lt William Robertson, US Army, and Lt Alexander Sylvashko, Red Army, shown in front of an East Meets West sign symbolising the historic meeting of the Soviet and US Armies, near Torgau, Germany





A soldier of the Volkssturm holds a Panzerschreck anti-tank weapon on the outskirts of Berlin



Soldiers raise the flag of the Soviet Union above the Reichstag in a symbolic gesture of the fall of Berlin



OPPOSING FORCES	
SOVIET RED ARMY	GERMAN ARMY
<p><b>MARSHAL GEORGI ZHUKOV</b> <i>1st Belorussian Front</i></p>	<p><b>MARSHAL IVAN KONEV</b> <i>1st Ukrainian Front</i></p>
<p><b>6,250 TANKS</b></p>	<p><b>2,700 AIRCRAFTS</b></p>
<p><b>2.5 MILLION TROOPS</b></p>	<p><b>1,500 GUNS</b></p>
<p><b>10,400 TANKS</b></p>	<p><b>3,300 AIRCRAFTS</b></p>
<p><b>1 MILLION TROOPS</b></p>	<p><b>41,600 GUNS</b></p>

soldiers worked their way around the back of the Reichstag and found a stairway to the roof. Sergeants Mikhail Yegorov and Meliton Kantaria rushed forward with a red banner and found an equestrian statue at the edge of the roofline. Minutes before 11pm, they jammed the staff into a space in the statue.

Although the hammer and sickle flag of the Soviet Union flew above the Reichstag on the night of 30 April, the building was not secured until 2 May, when the last 2,500 German defenders surrendered. The famed photos and footage of the flag raising were actually taken during a reenactment of the event on 3 May.

## CRUMBLING CENTRE

The Germans still forlornly defending Berlin were exhausted and running low on ammunition. General Weidling informed Hitler on the morning of 30 April that in a matter of hours the Red Army would be in control of the centre of the city.

The Soviet 5th Shock, 8th Guards, and 8th Guards Tank Armies advanced down the famed Unter den Linden, approaching the Reich Chancellery and the Führerbunker. Hitler authorised General Weidling to attempt a breakout from the encirclement that had formed,

and then with his longtime mistress, Eva Braun, who had become his wife only hours earlier, committed suicide in the underground labyrinth.

By this time, only about 10,000 resolute German soldiers remained in defensive positions, and Soviet troops and tanks were closing in from all sides. Soviet artillery pounded the remaining defenders, relentlessly shelling the Air Ministry building on the Wilhelmstrasse, a strong position that had been reinforced with steel, concrete, and barricades. The 3rd Shock Army advanced along the northern edge of the Tiergarten and battled a cluster of German tanks while maintaining pressure on the Reichstag and the surrounding area. In concert with the movement of the 8th Guards Army, the 3rd Shock Army cut the centre of Berlin in half.

On 1 May, General Hans Krebs, chief of the German General Staff, contacted General Vasily Chuikov, commander of the 8th Guards Army, informing the Soviet officer of Hitler's death and hoping to arrange surrender terms. The attempt failed when Chuikov insisted on unconditional surrender and Krebs responded that he did not have such authority. Meanwhile, some of the German troops began attempting to break out of embattled Berlin, particularly towards the west



and a hopeful surrender to British or American forces rather than the vengeful Soviets, whose people had suffered so much at the hands of the Nazis. Only a relative few succeeded after crossing the Charlottenbrücke Bridge over the River Havel; many were killed or captured when they abruptly encountered Soviet lines.

On the morning of 2 May, Red Army troops took control of the Reich Chancellery. Weidling had already sent a communiqué to General Chuikov at 1am, asking for another meeting. The German general was instructed to come to the Potsdamer Bridge at 6am. He was then taken to Chuikov's headquarters and surrendered within the hour.

Weidling issued orders for all German troops to follow suit and put the directive in writing at Chuikov's request. He also made a recording of the order, and Soviet trucks blared the message through the shattered streets of the city. Some pockets of diehard SS troops resisted until they were annihilated. At the troublesome Berlin Zoo flak tower, 350 haggard German soldiers stumbled into the daylight of defeat. The Battle of Berlin was over.

**"350 haggard German soldiers stumbled into the daylight of defeat"**

## COUNTING THE COST

The casualties were staggering. During the drive from the Oder to Berlin, at least 81,000 Soviet soldiers had died and well over one-quarter of a million were wounded. German losses are estimated at 100,000 killed, 220,000 wounded, and nearly half a million taken prisoner. At least 100,000 civilian residents of Berlin, some of whom committed suicide, had also perished.

Red Army soldiers raped and murdered countless German women. They destroyed and pillaged in retribution for the horrors previously inflicted on their Motherland by the Nazis. For some Berliners who survived the battle, the nightmare of Soviet vengeance was - perhaps - a fate worse than death.

Within a week of the fall of Berlin, World War II in Europe ended with the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany. The Third Reich, which Hitler boasted would last 1,000 years, had ended in fiery ruin in only 12.

# Berlin 1945

## 1 From encirclement to attack

On 26 April, Zhukov's 1st Belorussian Front advances west of the city's centre to Charlottenburg and northeast of the Tiergarten to the River Spree and the Moabit District. Two days of bitter combat are indicative of the tenacity of the German defenders.

## 4 Across the Spree

In the early morning hours of 29 April, Soviet soldiers seize the Moltke Bridge, the last remaining intact structure across the River Spree. The position facilitates the assault on the diplomatic quarter and the Interior Ministry.

## 2 Formidable flak towers

In the southwest corner of the Tiergarten near the Berlin Zoo, flak towers rain fire on advancing Soviet troops, shooting down on them from the concrete structures. One of these towers holds out until the bitter end on 2 May.

## 3 Crossing the canal

Despite Soviet shelling and German attempts to destroy it, Soviet troops capture the bridge on Potsdamerstrasse across the Landwehr Canal on 28 April, gaining a vantage point from which to mount the first attacks against the stronghold at the Berlin Zoo.



## 8 Surrender and Subjugation

On the morning of 2 May, General Helmuth Weidling meets Soviet soldiers at the Potsdamer Bridge and surrenders to General Vasily Chuikov shortly thereafter. Some of the defenders of Berlin attempt to break out of the encirclement to the west. However, most are killed or forced to surrender.

## 7 To the Reich Chancellery

After reaching the Potsdam rail station and moving across Lanbergerstrasse to the east on 1 May, Soviet troops advance along the Unter den Linden toward the Reich Chancellery, occupying the structure early the following morning. They also discover the Führerbunker and the charred remains of Hitler and Eva Braun.

## 6 Assaulting the Reichstag

On 30 April, the Soviet 79th Rifle Corps, commanded by Major General SI Perevertkin, begin a series of assaults on the Reichstag, which commands the Königsplatz. Late that evening, soldiers scramble to the roof of the building and plant the Soviet flag there. The building is secured on 2 May.

## 5 Hitler commits suicide

Deep beneath the Reich Chancellery, Hitler commits suicide in the Führerbunker at 3.30pm on 30 April. Eva Braun, his longtime mistress whom he married hours earlier, dies with the Führer. Their corpses are doused with gasoline and set aflame in the garden of the Reich Chancellery.





# Adolf Hitler's Suicide

Berlin, Germany  
30 April 1945



As the battle raged on the streets of Berlin, Nazi Germany's Führer was 15 metres underground in his subterranean lair, the Führerbunker. Adolf Hitler was

safe for now, but it wouldn't be long until the Third Reich's capital was overrun by the vengeful Red Army. Hitler's remaining allies had pleaded with him to escape south to the Alpine retreat of Berchtesgaden but the Führer, determined to be a martyr for the cause, stayed put. Now more mentally twisted than ever, he believed his presence in Berlin would inspire what was left of the Wehrmacht to hold out. There would be no humiliating armistice like in 1918.

Hitler's last few days were dominated by those he held in high regard deserting him. Heinrich Himmler attempted to make peace with the Allies while Hermann Göring appointed himself the new führer. It was only at the end of April that Hitler realised the game was up and made preparations for his passing. Under no circumstances would he be captured and suffer the same as Mussolini, strung up for the world to see. He married his long-time companion Eva Braun and dictated his final testament that, typically, was a tirade on how Jews were to blame for the war.

At 2.30am on 30 April, Hitler bid farewell to those in the Führerbunker. That afternoon, he was found dead. A Walther PPK pistol was on the floor next to him and his new wife also lay lifeless after biting on a cyanide capsule. The bodies were burned until they were just charred remains. The Wehrmacht's guns soon fell silent and the tyranny of the Third Reich was over.



## New Chancellery Garden

Hitler's body was burned to a crisp in the grounds above the bunker. Whether the corpses recovered by the Red Army were those of Hitler and Eva Braun is still hotly debated. Joseph Goebbels, who stayed with Hitler until the bitter end, ordered his body to be burned after he had already killed his six children with cyanide. Goebbels' body was later discovered by Red Army soldiers.

## Concrete tower

The Führerbunker had two concrete towers on the ground level that helped with ventilation and could also be used as emergency exits. Only one was completed while the other was left unfinished. The concrete block was tough but still felt the force of the Soviet shelling that was pummeling the Chancellery above. The complex shook with every artillery blast and the Vorbunker ceiling nearly collapsed.

## Hitler's Berlin command bunker

Located near the Reich Chancellery in Berlin, the Führerbunker was one part of a secret subterranean complex. Built in two phases, the Vorbunker was completed first in 1936 with the Führerbunker following in 1944. It was initially constructed as a temporary air-raid shelter, but as bombing raids increased and the war turned against Germany, the site was expanded to become a more permanent residence. It was here that Hitler spent the last three months of his life.



## Generators

The bunker was powered by a series of engines that had been installed once it was realised that Hitler was planning on long-term occupation. Housed in one room, the diesel generators provided electricity for the entire complex as well as ventilation and water-extraction pumps. The whole system was very loud and it is believed that this noise prevented anyone from hearing the gunshot that Hitler fired into his temple.

## End of the Führerbunker

The Soviets blew up the area in the late 1940s, destroying part of the bunker. Just over four decades later in 1988, the German Democratic Republic decided to demolish it further, blocking off its entrances in the process. Parts of the complex remain underground and there is talk of a reconstruction of the bunker opening to the public in the future.

## Reinforced concrete

The thick bunker walls were made of concrete and each door was made air-tight to protect from potential gas attacks. This made it bomb-proof, but despite being so well protected, the Führerbunker's weak point was its communication system. The small telephone switchboard meant the only way of contacting the outside world were calls to civilians that were used to find out if the Red Army had advanced to their sector yet.

## Subterranean tunnels

The Vorbunker was connected to the Führerbunker by a tunnel. This allowed easy access between the two areas of the underground complex. The entire bunker was 915 square metres in size and the main entrance was a red-carpeted corridor lined with paintings.

## The Vorbunker

As well as the main Führerbunker, there was another area of the compound known as the Vorbunker. It had 12 rooms compared to the Führerbunker's 20 and was located 6.4 metres underground. It was designed to house sanitary, administrative and auxiliary staff for the smooth running of the entire complex, even when Nazi Germany was coming ever closer to complete capitulation.

## A variety of rooms

Hitler stayed in the bunker for 105 days from January 1945 until his suicide in April. The area was kitted out with a number of quarters to make the stay as bearable and functional as possible. The Führer had an office and a map room to plan military strategy in, as well as a bedroom and a bathroom and even a room specifically reserved for his dogs and bodyguards.

## A little bit of luxury

The entire underground building was originally designed as a simple air-raid shelter but it became something much grander. The luxury of the Führerbunker may have been above a standard air-raid bunker but it was a world away from the Wolfsschanze (Wolf's Lair) where Hitler orchestrated his strategies during the war. The conference room in particular was cramped, but this was where the final military briefings of the German war effort were held.



A July 1947 photo of the rear entrance to the Führerbunker in the garden of the Reich Chancellery



# Battle of the Pacific

The war that engulfed half the world

Words Edoardo Albert

## PEARL HARBOR

7 DECEMBER 1941

At war with China since 7 July 1937, on 7 December, "a date which will live in infamy" according to President Roosevelt's speech to the US Congress, Japanese planes attacked the US naval base at Pearl Harbor on Hawaii, crippling eight battleships. Crucially, all the American aircraft carriers were out at sea when the Japanese Zeroes arrived. The war in the Pacific had begun.



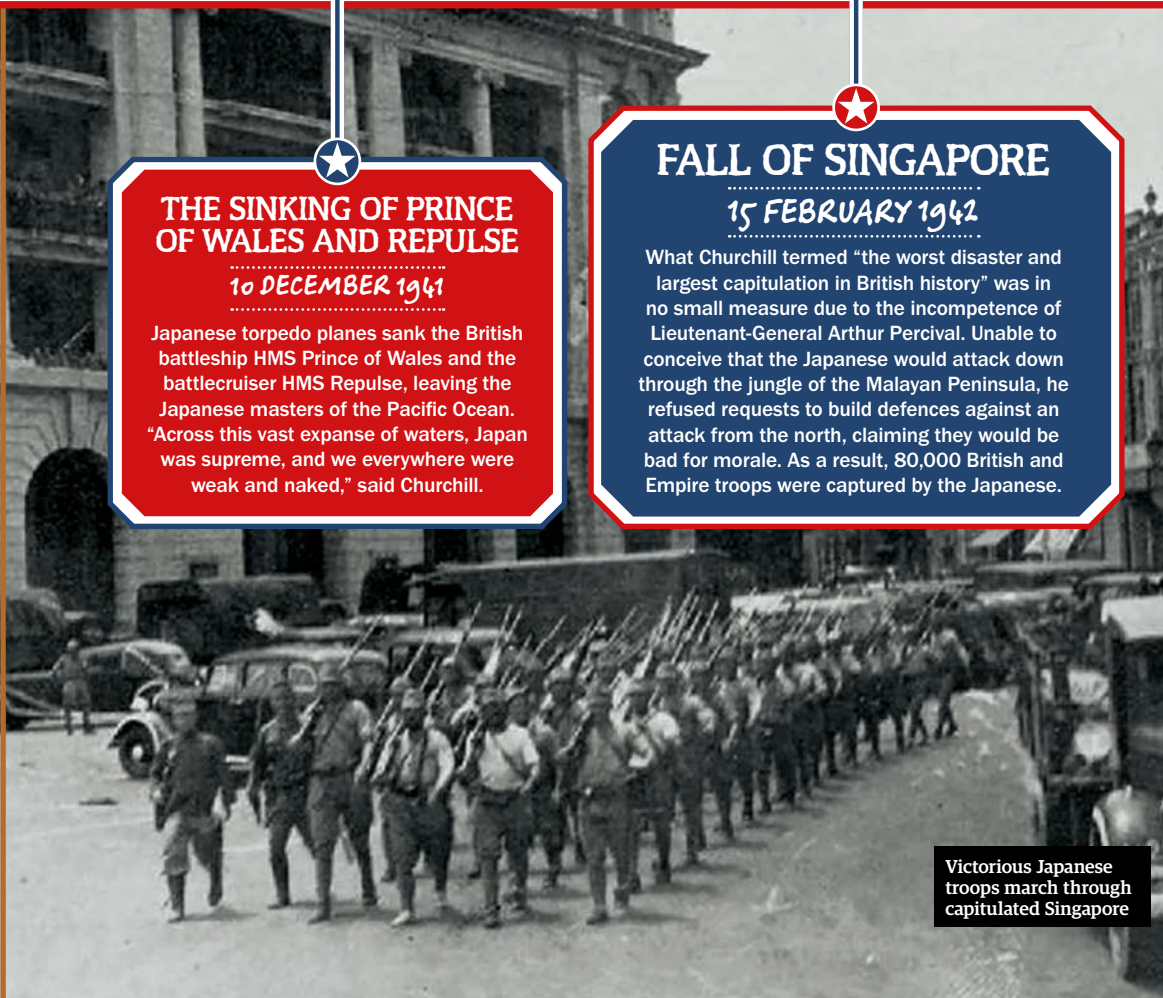
A fire boat sailing past a stricken US naval vessel following the attack on Pearl Harbor



## THE SINKING OF PRINCE OF WALES AND REPULSE

10 DECEMBER 1941

Japanese torpedo planes sank the British battleship HMS Prince of Wales and the battlecruiser HMS Repulse, leaving the Japanese masters of the Pacific Ocean. "Across this vast expanse of waters, Japan was supreme, and we everywhere were weak and naked," said Churchill.



Victorious Japanese troops march through capitulated Singapore

## FALL OF SINGAPORE

15 FEBRUARY 1942

What Churchill termed "the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history" was in no small measure due to the incompetence of Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival. Unable to conceive that the Japanese would attack down through the jungle of the Malayan Peninsula, he refused requests to build defences against an attack from the north, claiming they would be bad for morale. As a result, 80,000 British and Empire troops were captured by the Japanese.

## BATTLE OF THE JAVA SEA

27 FEBRUARY 1942

A combined command of American, British, Dutch and Australian warships attempting to stop the Japanese invasion of Java suffer a disastrous defeat, losing six major ships in the battle and three more in its aftermath. The battle marks the peak of Japanese naval power and allows for the swift occupation of the Dutch East Indies by Japanese troops.



## GENERAL MACARTHUR LEAVES THE PHILIPPINES

11 MARCH 1942

General MacArthur escaped the Philippines just before its fall to the advancing Japanese in a daring PT boat breakout. Arriving in Australia, he famously proclaimed, "I came through and I shall return."

American and Filipino soldiers trudge towards captivity in a journey that became known as the Bataan Death March

## BATAAN DEATH MARCH

9 APRIL 1942

Following the Japanese conquest of the Philippines, captured American and Filipino troops were marched over 60 miles to a prison camp without food or water and subjected to extreme brutality along the way. Thousands of Filipino and hundreds of American troops died on the march, their treatment later being adjudged a war crime.

## JAPANESE CONQUEST OF BURMA

JANUARY - MAY 1942

The Japanese army advanced through the British territory of Burma, cutting the Burma Road that supplied Chinese nationalist forces, who Japan was also fighting. They finally reached the border with India.

## DOOLITTLE RAID

18 APRIL 1942

Shaken by a series of defeats, American morale was greatly boosted by an attack on the Japanese capital Tokyo, planned by Lieutenant-Colonel James Doolittle and carried out by 16 B-25 bombers.

## BATTLE OF THE CORAL SEA

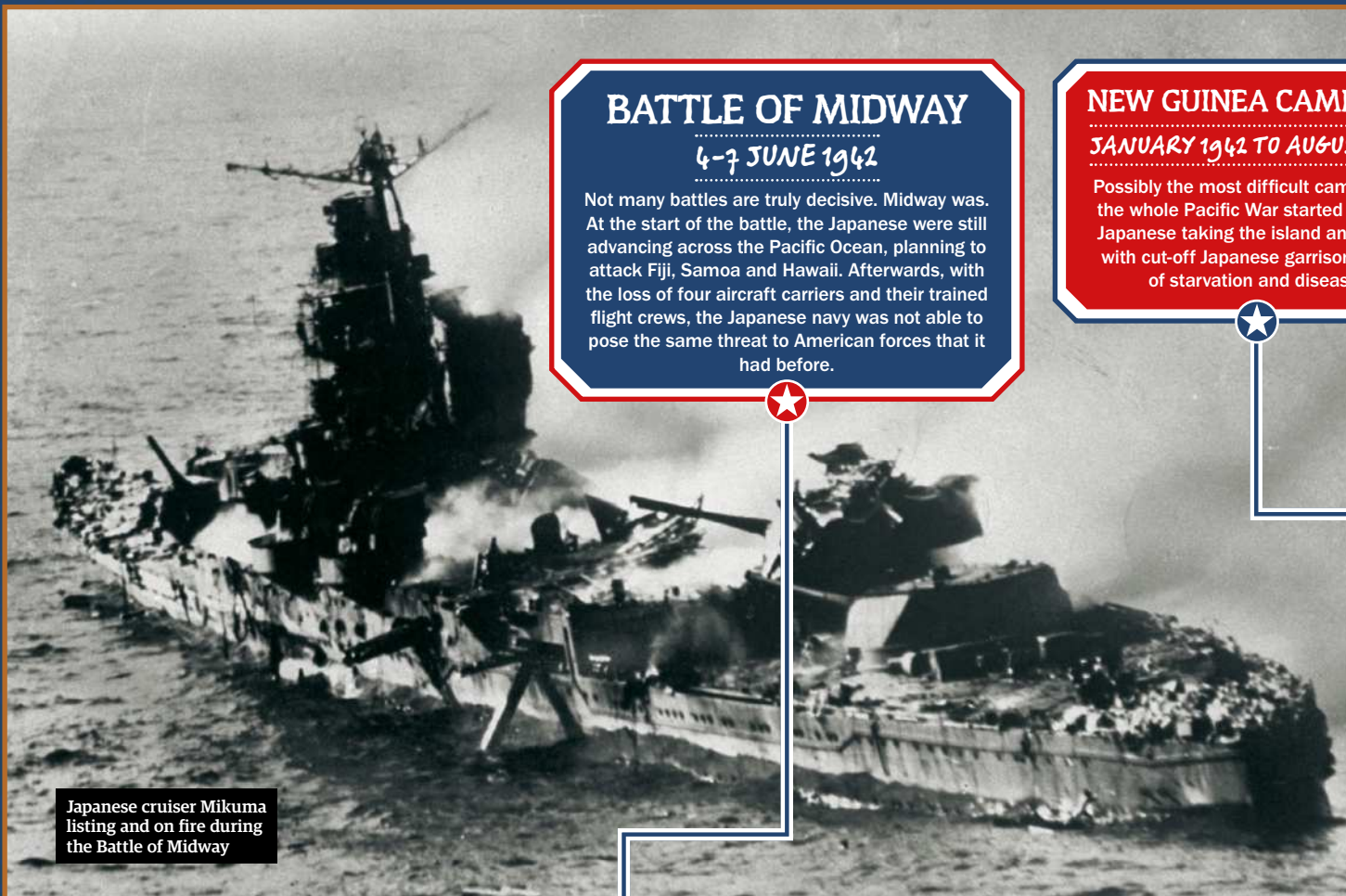
4-8 MAY 1942

This naval engagement between Japanese and American and Australian naval forces was the first sea battle in history in which the combatants didn't sight or fire directly on each other: it was a naval battle fought by carrier-based aircraft. Although a tactical victory for the Japanese, the battle prevented a Japanese invasion of New Guinea as well as putting two Japanese carriers out of action for the decisive Battle of Midway.

HMS Exeter sinking after being struck by a torpedo

The crew of the USS Lexington abandoning ship by sliding down ropes while a destroyer waits to pick them up





Japanese cruiser Mikuma listing and on fire during the Battle of Midway

## BATTLE OF MIDWAY

4-7 JUNE 1942

Not many battles are truly decisive. Midway was. At the start of the battle, the Japanese were still advancing across the Pacific Ocean, planning to attack Fiji, Samoa and Hawaii. Afterwards, with the loss of four aircraft carriers and their trained flight crews, the Japanese navy was not able to pose the same threat to American forces that it had before.

## NEW GUINEA CAMPAIGN

JANUARY 1942 TO AUGUST 1945

Possibly the most difficult campaign of the whole Pacific War started with the Japanese taking the island and ended with cut-off Japanese garrisons dying of starvation and disease.

## BREAKING THE CODE

EARLY 1942

By early 1942, American cryptanalysts had succeeded in breaking JN-25, the main cipher used by the Japanese navy. Information gained from this would be crucial in the battles ahead.

## NAVAL BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL

12-15 NOVEMBER 1942

This decisive naval battle stopped Japanese attempts to reinforce their army on Guadalcanal, although the Americans suffered heavier losses than the Japanese, including two admirals killed.

## GUADALCANAL CAMPAIGN

7 AUGUST 1942 - 9 FEBRUARY 1943

If Midway was the first defeat of the Japanese navy, Guadalcanal was the turning point against the Japanese army, marking a transition from Allied defensive operations to Allied offensive campaigns. The Guadalcanal campaign saw three big land battles and seven naval battles as well as daily aerial conflict. At its end, the Americans secured the island and its strategically important airfield.

## CHINDITS BEGIN OPERATIONS

8 FEBRUARY 1943

Brigadier Orde Wingate led 3,000 men, later called Chindits, into Burma to conduct prolonged guerilla warfare behind Japanese lines. This first long-distance operation was the start of special forces warfare.

Two US Marines fire a captured Japanese .50 calibre machine gun at attacking airplanes

Lieutenant John F Kennedy aboard his motor torpedo boat, PT-109



## OPERATION VENGEANCE

18 APRIL 1943

Flying on a morale-boosting trip to raise the spirits of his troops, Admiral Yamamoto, commander of the Japanese navy, was intercepted by American P-38 fighter planes, and his plane was shot down. His body was found the next day in the jungle, the admiral still strapped into his seat and holding his katana.

Only the P-38 Lightning had the range necessary to intercept the plane carrying Admiral Yamamoto

## BATTLE OF GUAM

21 JULY - 10 AUGUST 1944

The gruelling battle to retake Guam is a portent of battles to come: of the Japanese defenders, only 485 are captured. The remaining 18,000 fight to the death.

## BATTLE OF THE PHILIPPINE SEA

19-20 JUNE 1944

If Midway decimated the Japanese carrier fleet, the 'Marianas Turkey Shoot', as US naval airmen dubbed the unequal battle, delivered the coup de grâce to its ability to wage aerial warfare from the sea. By the battle's end, the Japanese navy had lost three aircraft carriers and the bulk of its remaining naval airmen. The war of the aircraft carriers has been lost.

## PT-109

1-2 AUGUST 1943

Lieutenant John F Kennedy's motor torpedo boat was rammed by a Japanese destroyer. Over the next few days, Kennedy swam miles, towing a badly burned crewman, taking his surviving crew from one desolate island to another until they were eventually rescued. Kennedy's conduct made him a war hero and contributed to his future political career.

Shells strike around USS White Plains while planes scramble into the air from the deck of the USS Kitkun Bay



## BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

23-26 OCTOBER 1944

The Japanese navy fought four separate engagements to try to stop the Americans landing on Leyte and cutting Japan off from its sources of raw materials and oil in southeast Asia. The battle, possibly the largest naval battle in history, ended in a decisive defeat for the Japanese navy, rendering it increasingly incapable of hindering future Allied naval actions.

The USS St. Lo explodes after a kamikaze attack during the Battle of Leyte Gulf

## FIRST KAMIKAZE ATTACKS

25 OCTOBER 1944

With the war turning against them, the Japanese started kamikaze (suicide) attacks on American naval vessels, with five Zeros attacking US aircraft carriers. Kamikaze attacks reached their zenith during the Battle for Okinawa.

## BATTLE OF MANILA

3 FEBRUARY - 3 MARCH 1945

The most brutal urban fighting of the Pacific War saw 100,000 civilians massacred by Japanese soldiers as well as the almost total destruction of the historic city.

## BATTLE OF IWO JIMA

19 FEBRUARY - 26 MARCH 1945

Perhaps the most famous of the island battles of the Pacific War, the battle for Iwo Jima is a paradigm of the war's later battles: complete American air and material superiority clashing with an inflexible Japanese determination to fight to the last man. Of the 21,000 Japanese troops on the island, only 216 are captured.

Tokyo after the firebombing

## FIREBOMBING OF TOKYO

9/10 MARCH 1945

279 B-29 Superfortresses, flying at 30,000 feet and so above the reach of Japanese air defences, dropped 1,510 tons of bombs on the Japanese capital, starting a firestorm that killed 100,000 people. With industrial production spread through Tokyo and its suburbs, the attack greatly reduced Japanese war output, but the raid is still often cited as an Allied war crime.

US Marines raise the first flag atop Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima



A US Marine advances through Japanese fire during the Battle of Okinawa

## BATTLE OF OKINAWA

1 APRIL - 22 JUNE 1945

As one of the five Japanese home islands, the battle to take Okinawa was brutal and unforgiving. Known as tetsu no ame ('rain of steel') in Japanese, the conflict produced 160,000 casualties and the most intense kamikaze actions of the war. By the end of the battle, nearly half the island's population of 300,000 had been killed, committed suicide or gone missing.

## JEWEL VOICE BROADCAST

15 AUGUST 1945

Six days after the bombing of Nagasaki, Emperor Hirohito broadcasted the formal acceptance of the Allied terms for ending the war: Japan had finally surrendered.

## SUICIDE MISSION OF YAMATO

7 APRIL 1945

Yamato, the biggest, most powerful battleship ever built, steamed from port to attack the Allied invasion of Okinawa. It never reached the island. Attacked by torpedo planes, the battleship exploded and sank.

## SINKING OF USS INDIANAPOLIS

30 JULY 1945

Hit by a torpedo from a Japanese submarine, 890 men survive the sinking of their ship only to die over the next four days from dehydration and, notoriously, shark attacks. Of the original 890, 316 are rescued.

## ATOMIC BOMBS ON HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI

6 AND 9 AUGUST 1945

Appalled by their losses on Okinawa, the American government seized on the chance, provided by the Manhattan Project's successful development of atomic bombs, to end the war without invading the Japanese mainland. On 6 and 9 August, atomic bombs were dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, effectively wiping them out and killing somewhere between 129,000 and 226,000 people.

The mushroom cloud over Nagasaki following the dropping of the second atomic bomb on the city





# Dividing the Spoils

In the wake of Germany's surrender, the Allied powers had little time to rest on their laurels. Epochal decisions had to be made about Europe's geopolitical future. Would Britain, the US and the Soviet Union reach lasting agreements or sow the seeds of future hostilities?

Words Jon Wright

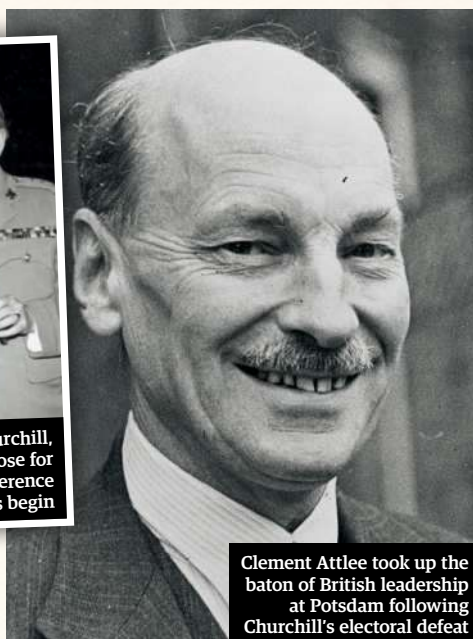


Berlin's Reichstag in ruins at the time of the conference. Leaders and delegates were staggered by how much damage had been inflicted on the city





The Big Three: Churchill, Truman and Stalin pose for photos as the conference negotiations begin



Clement Attlee took up the baton of British leadership at Potsdam following Churchill's electoral defeat



The French leader Charles de Gaulle was forever resentful for not being invited to Potsdam, but the US and Britain fought his corner and France emerged with enhanced influence



The frantic events of the Potsdam Conference, which ran from 17 July to 2 August 1945, unfolded at the Cecilienhof in the outskirts of Berlin. The lawns in the immediate vicinity of the palace were suitably well tended, but the haunting sights and sounds of the nearby city were impossible to ignore. Berlin, the *Guardian* reported, was "the centre of a ruined country and continent... like the corpse of some wretched traitor in the 17th century, broken on the wheel of war".

Perhaps this helped to hammer home the urgent task facing the Allied leaders: to bring order to Europe, to lay the foundations of a peaceable future and, toughest of all, to strike a balance between specific national interests and a compromise that everyone found palatable.

The quagmire had become a little boggier since the Yalta Conference of February 1945. Franklin Roosevelt - with his enviable ability to calm tensions through the exercise of his famous charm - was dead, replaced as president by Harry Truman, who had little experience in foreign affairs. Churchill, as the conference began, was still awaiting the results of the British General Election, which threatened to oust him from power. Stalin, meanwhile, was making it increasingly obvious that he would not yield an inch on certain issues. The big questions were clear enough - how to treat and refashion Germany and establish sustainable forms of governance - but suspicion often outweighed trust among the key players.

A nervy atmosphere prevailed in mid July. Truman, especially, had concerns (though they were quickly banished) and he spent his first pre-conference days grumbling about his digs: the shoddy architecture "looks like hell" and reminded him of "Kansas City Union Station". The Soviet troops had already ransacked the place - not even a tin spoon could be found - and the president had to make do with a ramshackle assortment of furniture. He struggled

through but, he quipped, "What a nightmare it would give to an interior designer."

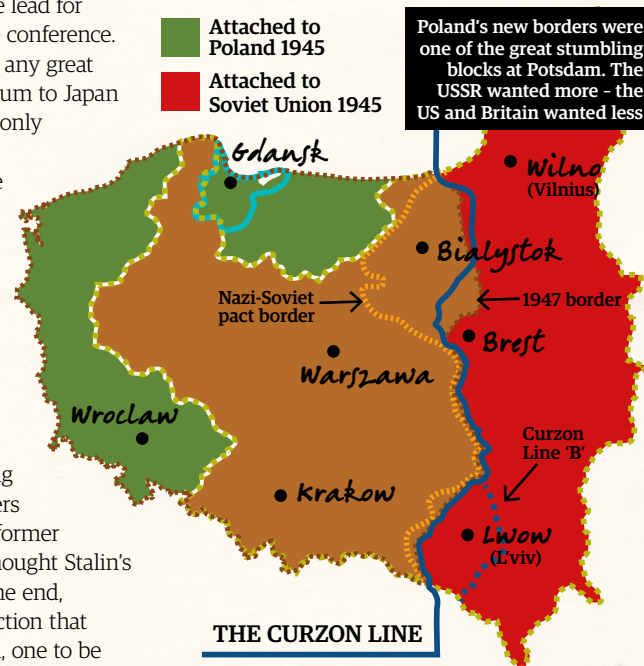
There was also the small matter of praying for successful nuclear tests back home (there was still a war to be won in Asia, after all) and of how seriously he would be taken by his fellow leaders. Fortunately, first impressions were promising. "I can deal with Stalin," he reported: Uncle Joe was outspoken "but smart as hell". Churchill was friendly and would be tolerable if he stopped giving "me a lot of hooey about how great my country is". Before too long, however, this had morphed into: "Churchill just talks all the time and Stalin just grunts - though you usually know what he means."

Nine major meetings took place between 17 and 25 July, at which point Churchill had to return home to face the electoral music. He lost out to Clement Attlee, who took the lead for Britain during the remainder of the conference. Some issues were resolved without any great fuss. Sending a threatening ultimatum to Japan (signed by Britain and the US) was only natural. Closer to home, Germany's conquests since the late 1930s were simply erased from the map and the older borders reinstated.

Poland, however, proved a trickier proposition. The country was now run by a government overseen by the USSR, and Stalin was adamant his country be duly recompensed for all it had suffered. He insisted on a western Polish border following the line of the Oder and Neisse rivers that gobbled up a huge amount of former German land. Britain and the US thought Stalin's demands were wildly inflated. In the end, they were willing to swallow the fiction that this was only a provisional solution, one to be

revisited in future treaty negotiations. The USSR and Poland left Potsdam with a sense that this was a permanent arrangement. Either way, a huge resettlement programme continued, with millions of Germans being forced to abandon the newly expanded Poland. The conference pleaded that this exodus should be humane and evenly paced: it turned out to be neither.

Here was an early sign that Stalin's guiding objective was to establish the whole of Eastern Europe as a Soviet-dominated bloc, a buffer between his power and the West. This was also reflected in Stalin resenting the kindness being lavished on Italy (welcomed back into the





community of nations in the blink of an eye because it had abandoned fascism relatively early) and the way countries like Bulgaria and Hungary were being treated as pariahs. Stalin wanted to look after his own and insisted that formal peace treaties with such countries be undertaken as soon as possible, a wish that Potsdam granted.

A very different world was emerging. Stalin could blithely sign up to freedom declarations promising free elections and free speech, but Truman wasn't too far wide of the mark when he privately referred to the Soviets as "looters". Though, of course, the US would develop its own, subtler methods of expanding influence

in Western Europe, pouring in cash through the Marshall Plan in 1948 or posing as the enemy of unwelcome Soviet encroachment through the Truman Doctrine of 1947.

What, though, of the great villain of the piece, Germany? Preventing a repeat performance was crucial. The removal of Nazi officials and conspicuous sympathisers was swift, and those who had committed war crimes were to be brought to trial. The legal and educational systems were to be cleansed of Nazi ideals and all opportunities to re-arm were to be squashed. Germany's future economy would be based on light industry and agriculture.

The US and Britain were keen to see Germany remain, in some sense, as a coherent

political and economic unit (this made good sense when faced with Stalin's posturing), but decentralisation was also vital. Germany was to be divided into four zones of occupation (see below) and, while the locals were of course to be allowed a role in various areas of governance, the whole enterprise was to be overseen by an Allied Control Council and guided by a Council of Foreign Ministers (the big three plus France and China). Germans were to be granted an opportunity "to prepare for the eventual reconstruction of their life on a democratic and peaceful basis". This would take time and, in the interim, the German people as a whole were to "atone for the terrible crimes" under a leadership "they openly approved and blindly obeyed". Reparations were also part of this logic and

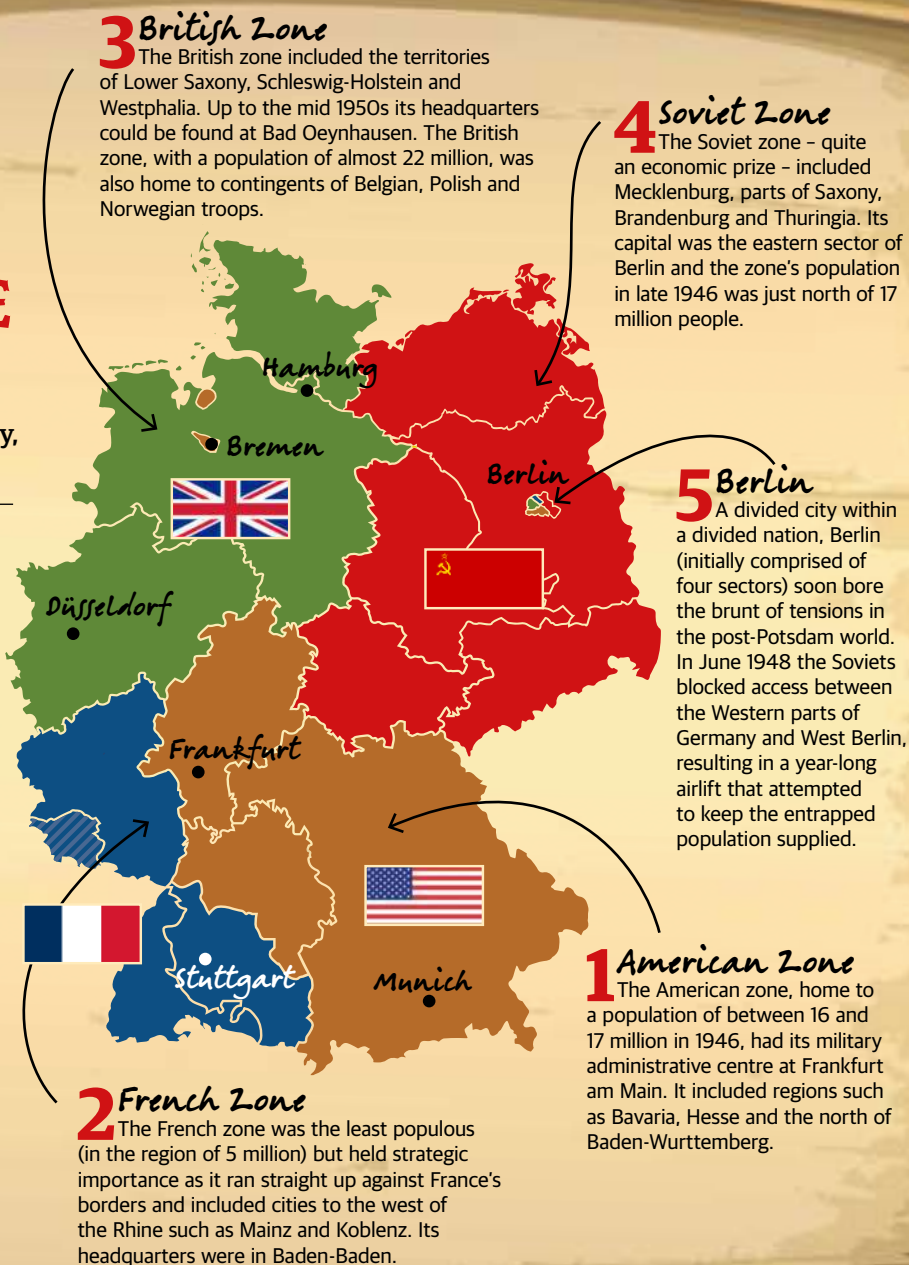
## HOW DO YOU SOLVE A PROBLEM LIKE GERMANY?

A plan was made to split up Germany, but how well did it actually work?

The importance of the four-part division of Germany into four occupied zones is reflected in the calibre of the individuals assigned the task of getting the show started. The British sector was governed by Field Marshall Montgomery, while the Americans recruited no less a figure than General Eisenhower to oversee their zone. Eisenhower, as a side note, was obsessively puritanical when it came to fraternisation between US troops and the locals.

A fly in the ointment was France. Much aggrieved by its exclusion from the Potsdam talks, the nation was lacklustre in performing its duties as an occupying power, though it became more amenable when granted control over the Saarland Protectorate (separated from Germany in 1947, it is the striped area on the map).

The Soviet Union quickly abandoned all pretence of contributing to a friendly, four-part administration and, by 1947, the Soviet-occupied zone had become the German Democratic Republic. Interestingly, America demanded two small patches of territory, Bremen and Bremerhaven, in the British sector to ensure a presence in the north.





Potsdam wisely opted to seize industrial assets rather than cash.

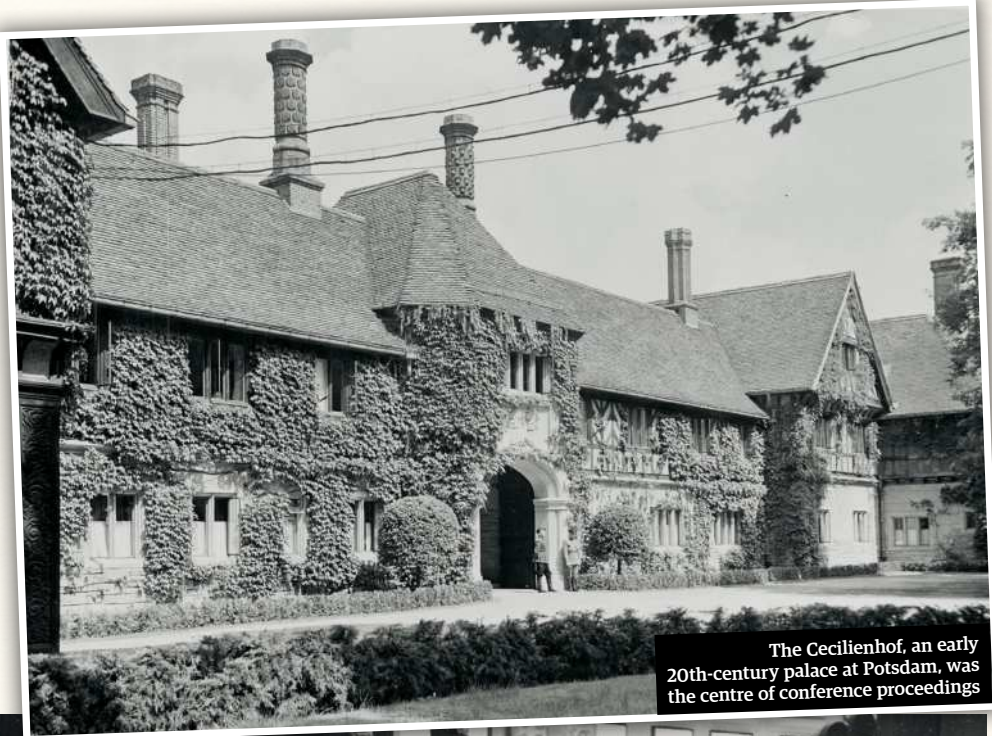
So was Potsdam a success? The French newspaper *Le Monde* certainly didn't think so and wrote of a future thunderstorm hiding in a cloud. They were correct in their predictions as antagonisms quickly blossomed. The Soviets flexed their muscles, insisting (unsuccessfully) that they should be allowed bases on the Dardanelles Strait, being sluggish about removing their troops from Iran, and making a mockery of the division of Germany by establishing a fully fledged Communist regime in the east of the country.

Truman for one was pleased to get away from Potsdam. On 5 August, at the beginning of his ocean voyage, he enjoyed lunch with King George VI. The food was pleasingly plain after the venison, caviar and champagne of the conference circuit. The two men snacked on soup, lamb chops, potatoes and peas, and ice cream for dessert.

The King also enjoyed showing off a sword that Queen Elizabeth I had once given to Francis Drake. Truman admired the weapon and, while George rather liked it too, he commented that it was not properly balanced. Intentional or not, this was as

good a symbol as any for the events that had transpired at Potsdam. On the very next day, Truman received news that an atomic bomb had successfully detonated above the city

of Hiroshima. The prospect of a future arms race had now been added to the mayhem, and many observers had the sinking feeling that a Cold War had already begun.



The Cecilienhof, an early 20th-century palace at Potsdam, was the centre of conference proceedings



The conference in full swing at the Cecilienhof. Photo opportunities were limited and the press were not granted access to proceedings, but news of events had a habit of trickling out





# SPIES

## who won WWII

These are the spies, secret agents,  
codebreakers and saboteurs - Britain's  
secret army who fought in the shadows  
in a bid to cripple Nazi Germany

Words Will Lawrence and Mike Haskew



**F**ollowing the disaster that unfolded during the Battle of France, Britain found itself standing alone in the world; the only major power standing between Hitler and the conquest of Western Europe. With his army shattered and the threat of invasion a near certainty, Churchill needed a plan to take control of the dire situation so he turned to his secret services, and the newly formed Special Operations Executive, to carry

the war back to Hitler. A unique group of secret agents, overseas guerrilla fighters, code-breaking boffins and specially trained saboteurs would work tirelessly to turn the tide of conflict in the Allies' favour.

Here we choose 20 of the most notable agents and reveal their stories. Most worked to bring down tyranny. Some chose to support it. Many sacrificed their lives. Whatever their role, their exploits stand as some of most intriguing tales from World War II.

**"Most worked to bring down tyranny. Some chose to support it. Many sacrificed their lives"**



## IAN FLEMMING



The James Bond creator enjoyed a distinguished career in military intelligence

As a journalist, Ian Fleming journeyed to Russia in 1939 to report on a trade deal, although his real mission was to ascertain Russia's military strength and morale ahead of what looked like certain war. When Britain did finally enter the conflict, Fleming was appointed as assistant to Rear-Admiral John Godfrey, the director of Naval Intelligence, and took up the position of lieutenant in the Special Branch of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, a rank he was later to bestow on his famous literary creation, James Bond.

Fleming helped develop ties between the UK and US over the running of secret agents and was heavily involved in the formation of the 30 Assault Unit, a British commando group designed to support troops and glean vital information for the war effort. Among their greatest achievements were the capture of an Enigma machine – the key piece of German encryption equipment – and the seizure of the complete records of the German navy.

He is also widely credited as the author of the Trout Memo, which culminated in Operation Mincemeat, a deception to disguise the 1943

Allied invasion of Sicily. Mincemeat saw the body of a dead tramp dressed as a British officer, supplied with false papers, and dumped off the coast of Spain. It was washed up and intercepted by German agents.

Fleming's knowledge of secret operations found voice in the creation of the most famous fictional spy of all time, James Bond, who he cast as the hero of his 1953 novel *Casino Royale*. Fleming wrote a further 13 Bond books. The hero's name was taken from an ornithologist, though the likes of M and Q branch were drawn from his experiences in British intelligence. It is thought that the character of M was based on Fleming's boss, Rear-Admiral Godfrey.

Fleming outlines one of his spyschemes, Operation Ruthless

Frank Birch, on behalf of Naval Section of G.C. & C.S., described this as a "very ingenious plot". It had, for him, "the enormous advantage of not giving anything away if it fails". He went into details of the German signals and markings and attached a three-page memorandum (L. No. 191) from the German Naval Section of G.C. & C.S. on the "Activities of German Naval Units in the Channel". Arrangements then went forward. D.N.I. obtained the necessary bomber from Lord Beaverbrook, Fleming brought his party together and went off to Dover to await his chance, and the Air Ministry co-operated. But his chance did not come. No birds were rising and V.A. Dover suggested looking for them elsewhere:

"From: V.A. Dover To: Admiralty for D.N.I. for G.C. & C.S. to 1st S.L."

1029/16 October. Naval Cypher D at AXX

Important. Personal.

Operation RUTHLESS postponed. Two reconnaissance flights by Coastal Command revealed no suitable craft operating at night and evidence from V/T is also negative. Suggest material and organisation should not be dispersed. Possibly Portsmouth area may be more fruitful. Lieutenant Commander Fleming returns to Admiralty 1800 today Wednesday."

How much importance was attached to the operation may be judged from a letter by Frank Birch to Callaghan, dated

Ian Fleming in a classic publicity shot



Fleming imagined Bond as looking like US singer Hoagy Carmichael



## ROGER LANDES

The betrayed agent who got his revenge



After working with Claude de Baissac, Roger Landes took over the Scientist network, though was forced to escape into Spain when betrayed by French Resistance leader André Grandclement. In the UK he was suspected of being a turncoat, though was found innocent and returned to France to help rebuild the network ahead of the D-Day operations. Once on the ground, the Resistance leaders dispatched Grandclement and Landes was lumbered with the unenviable job of killing Grandclement's wife.

## 'TOMMY' YEO-THOMAS

The super-spy who inspired James Bond

Yeo-Thomas, who was code-named White Rabbit by the Gestapo, was parachuted into France three times before eventually being captured and tortured. He was taken to Buchenwald concentration camp but managed to escape. Once, while on a train in France, he engaged in conversation with Klaus Barbie, the notorious Nazi known as the 'Butcher of Lyon'. Like Bond, he is said to have employed a number of techniques to escape his enemies - including jumping from a train, strangling a guard, wearing disguises and riding in a hearse - and is also said to have been a hit with women. He went on to win the George Cross.

## LEO MARKS

The SOE's chief cryptographer

Conscripted in January 1942, Marks trained as a cryptographer and went on to join the Special Operations Executive (SOE) rather than joining his colleagues at Bletchley Park. He briefed a clutch of SOE agents who were then sent into occupied Europe, including Noor Inayat-Khan as well as the Grouse/Swallow team of saboteurs sent to destroy Hitler's heavy water facility in Norway.

Marks recognised that there were some serious defects in the existing cipher system and so set about working with agents on memorising unpublished and memorable poems. He was also credited with reinventing the one-time pad, whereby agent and home office held the only two copies of pads of random letters used to communicate, which the agent destroyed after its initial use.

## FRANCIS SUTTILL

The network mastermind betrayed at the last minute

Francis Suttill was chosen to establish and run the Prosper network based in Paris, and his list of successful missions included the sabotage of the Chaingy power station, the destruction of 1,000 litres of petrol and a clutch of attacks on goods trains running the Orléans-Paris line. He also founded a safe house at the School of National Agriculture at Grignon, which has been cited as one of the most important SOE houses in France. The collapse of the Prosper network was a tragedy in which hundreds of SOE agents and Resistance fighters were swiftly betrayed and captured.



## JOZEF GABČÍK & JAN KUBIŠ

The Czech soldiers who gave their life in Operation Anthropoid

These two soldiers in the Czechoslovak army-in-exile worked under SOE instruction in Operation Anthropoid, which led to the assassination of SS Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich in Prague in May 1942. The mission was the only successful assassination of a senior Nazi officer during World War II, although it proved a pyrrhic victory, prompting terrible SS reprisals against civilians in the region.

Jozef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš were among a number of troops parachuted into Czechoslovakia. They met with anti-Nazi sympathisers and, after planning and aborting a number of assassination missions, settled on an ambush of Heydrich's car. On the morning of 27 May, as Heydrich approached, Gabčík stepped in front of the car and opened fire with his British-issued Sten sub-machine gun, which jammed, allowing Heydrich to return fire with his pistol. Kubiš then launched an explosive at the car, fragments of which ripped through the bumper, embedding shrapnel in Heydrich's left-hand side. The gunfight continued before Gabčík and Kubiš made their escape.

The assassins assumed that their attack had failed. Heydrich, however, succumbed to his wounds and died on 4 June. Hitler was absolutely furious at what had happened, and ordered immediate reprisals, which included the Lidice Massacre where a whole village was destroyed. Despite their brutal retaliation, the Nazis were unable to find the perpetrators until resistance fighter Karel Čurda turned himself in to the Gestapo and betrayed the team's local contacts. Following a vicious manhunt characterised by brutal Gestapo interrogation techniques, Kubiš, Gabčík and the other parachutists were eventually besieged in the Sts. Cyril and Methodius Cathedral in Prague. Here they died, either during the ferocious gunfight or via suicide as the Nazis closed in.



Jan Kubiš, whose explosive went on to kill Heydrich



Heydrich's Mercedes after the attack



# AGENCY WORK

Discover the dizzying array of British intelligence organisations

**MI9:** Responsible for the interrogation of enemy prisoners of war until 1941, MI9 also assisted in the escape and evasion of Allied prisoners and the debriefing of those who successfully reached England. MI9 also communicated with prisoners who were still in captivity, sending them instructions and equipment through clandestine sources.

**MI6:** Also known as the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), MI6 serves to this day as the primary foreign intelligence agency of the British government. During World War II, it established covert operations offices in the United States, Canada and elsewhere, conducting successful operations in all theatres of the conflict.

**MI8:** Serving as the signals intelligence section of the War Office, it was the responsibility of MI8 to establish and manage a worldwide network of radio transmission posts referred to as the 'Y Stations'. MI8 was responsible for communications security and for the Radio Security Service (RSS) for 18 months during 1939-41, prior to the absorption of the RSS by MI6.

**MI7:** The genesis of British press and propaganda management occurred with MI7. At the outbreak of World War II, the section was reconstituted with primarily civilian personnel working as censors and propagandists. In the spring of 1940, most of the functions of MI7 were transferred to the British Ministry of Information.

**MI5:** Also called the Security Service, MI5 served as the domestic counterintelligence and security section of British Intelligence. During World War II, MI5, which remains active today, developed and administered the XX double agent programme and controlled the entry of foreign nationals to Britain through the London Reception Centre at the Royal Patriotic School.

**MI10:** Responsible for the analysis of various types of technical intelligence across the globe during World War II, MI10 regularly conducted evaluations of captured enemy weapons and a wide range of emerging technology as it was brought to Britain from the field. MI10 was eventually merged into the Government Communications Headquarters.

The modern MI6 Building in London; an iconic landmark in the spy world



## Naval Intelligence Division:

Also known as Room 39, the Naval Intelligence Division (NID) was created in 1912. During World War II, NID handled naval Ultra transmission decrypts and fielded information-gathering operatives with its Commando 30 Assault Unit. NID officers were active in British warzones across the world and were present at Operations Torch and Overlord.

## PETER FLEMING



The dashing writer and adventurer was a prime mover during the secret war in the East

The elder brother of Ian, the effortlessly glamorous Peter Fleming became a prominent figure in British intelligence, working with Colin Gubbins on the formation of the Auxiliary Units, who would fight a resistance war in the UK should the Germans complete a successful invasion. When Gubbins left to form the SOE, he took Fleming with him.

In April 1941, armed with a ton of explosives, £40,000 in notes and gold sovereigns and Italian pocket dictionaries, Fleming and a team of agents entered Northern Greece. They held a key valley in Macedonia, the Monastir Gap, against the might of the German army, before withdrawing and playing havoc with enemy communications, blowing up bridges and railways as they went. Fleming and his men also helped evacuate the British Vice Consul and diplomatic staff to Cairo.

His abilities saw him transferred to India and then Ceylon to head up D Division in charge of military deception operations in southeast Asia. He played a prominent role in the British invasion of Burma - a territory that had been lost during the Japanese invasion of 1942 - planting information that claimed British forces in the region were much larger than they really were. In June 1945 his efforts were rewarded with an OBE.



## NOOR INAYAT KHAN



A courageous spy princess whose life ended in tragedy

Descended from Tipu Sultan, an 18th-century ruler of Mysore, Inayat Khan joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force - taking the name Nora Baker - before entering the SOE in February 1943. Despite reservations about her suitability for a secret agency role, she became the first female wireless operator to be sent to France and she survived the collapse of the Prosper network.

Though ordered to leave by Colonel Maurice Buckmaster, head of the SOE's French operations, she bravely stayed on and, with all the Prosper leaders in captivity, became the single most important SOE asset in the entire region as she continued to transmit information back to England. Unfortunately, in October 1943 the Gestapo captured her after she was betrayed by a double agent.

She twice escaped her captors only to be retaken immediately, and when she was transferred to a prison at Pforzheim she is said to have been perpetually chained in a crouching position. She was then moved to the death camp at Dachau and executed in July 1944. An unnamed guard gave a description of the death of a woman who is thought to be Inayat Khan, and its content is extremely upsetting. She was awarded the George Cross in 1949.



## ALAN TURING

The mathematical genius who helped crack the Enigma code

Alan Turing was a brilliant mathematician born in London. He studied at both Cambridge and Princeton universities before going on to work for the British Code and Cypher School even before World War II. Once war was declared, Turing took up a full-time role at Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire where he worked diligently to decipher the military codes used by the enemy, his primary efforts aimed at cracking the Enigma code.

The Enigma was the German armed forces' enciphering machine used to send messages securely. Polish mathematicians had cracked the original codes but the Germans increased its security by changing the cipher system on a daily basis. Along with colleague Gordon Welchman, Turing developed a machine known as the Bombe, which replicated the action of several Enigma machines wired together and significantly reduced the work of the codebreakers. From mid 1940, the team at Bletchley Park was regularly reading German Luftwaffe signals.

However, it was a different matter in the Battle of the Atlantic, a crucial theatre of conflict. Here, given the German Navy's greater cipher discipline, messages relayed back and forth between the Kriegsmarine and U-boats had flummoxed the codebreakers at Bletchley. The Allies struck gold, however, with the capture of U-110, which provided them with an intact naval Enigma machine. This was soon dispatched to Turing and the other boffins at Bletchley who got to work. Their efforts were further boosted by the fact that the German high command believed the codes used in the naval communication were inviolable, and soon the Allied convoys were perpetually dodging the U-boat wolfpacks.

The Germans' inclusion of a fourth rotor in the Enigma was a setback, and the U-boats once again enjoyed a 'happy time' during 1942 when they terrorised the Atlantic convoys. Nonetheless, Turing eventually cracked this problem too, and he proved a key asset for the Allies. His work was memorialised in the 2014 film *The Imitation Game*.



Turing's phenomenal Bombe machine

## TOR GLAD

A Norwegian who worked as a double agent in tandem with John Moe

Tor Glad, a Norwegian citizen, came ashore in Scotland with John Moe and turned double agent under the MI5 XX programme. Glad participated in staged sabotage operations and transmitted false radio broadcasts that convinced the Germans that the Allies planned to invade Norway prior to the actual invasion of North Africa in 1942. The Germans were compelled to station more than 300,000 troops in Norway to defend against an invasion that never came. However, British handlers came to doubt Glad's continuing value and eventually interned him in 1943.

## ROMAN CZERNIAWSKI

Polish double agent fed false D-Day information to the Germans

Czerniawski escaped to Britain and was heavily scrutinised; both MI6 and MI5 questioned him, and the British turned him under the MI5 XX programme. With the code name 'Brutus', he passed false information to the Germans, but his strong anti-Soviet sentiment concerned the British that German authorities had become suspicious. By the end of 1943, he was deemed safely operational and he then transmitted false information prior to D-Day, helping convince the Germans that the invasion of Europe would take place in the Pas-de-Calais.



## JUAN PUJOL GARCÍA

Catalan double agent played a pivotal role in D-Day deceptions  

Code-named Garbo, Juan Pujol García offered his services to German intelligence before working with MI6 as a double agent. He co-created a network of 27 imaginary sub-agents through whom he provided misinformation to the Germans during Operation Fortitude, which aimed to disguise the location of the D-Day landings. In one key transmission, he deceived the Germans so completely that they kept two armoured divisions and 19 infantry divisions in the Pas-de-Calais, waiting for an invasion, giving the Allies time to establish their bridgehead.

## CLAUDE DE BAISSAC

A key player in France's Scientist network

Mauritian Claude de Baissac, brother of fellow SOE operative Lise de Baissac, parachuted into France on 30 July 1942 with Harry Peulevé and helped form the Scientist network in the Bordeaux area. Among their operations they attacked the local U-boat pens. During the assault phase of Operation Overlord in June 1944, the head of SOE operations in France sent de Baissac back to Normandy to re-found Scientist, and he worked on the army's flanks providing tactical intelligence. His bravado is recorded in one episode where he received an SAS captain on the upper storey of a house with a German HQ on the ground floor.





# NANCY GRACE AUGUSTA WAKE



Her life in jeopardy, the Nazis' most wanted agent survived the war

The most decorated woman in Allied service during World War II, Nancy Wake was continually in danger in Nazi-occupied France. Undeterred, she risked her life initially as a courier for the French Resistance. She remained elusive, the Gestapo deeming her its most wanted enemy spy, nicknaming her the 'White Mouse', and placing a bounty of 5 million francs on her head.

Wake's determination to thwart the Nazis grew from first-hand experience. Born in New Zealand, she moved with her family to Australia, ran away from home at 16, and made her way to New York City and London. She worked briefly as a nurse while learning the craft of journalism. During the 1930s she took a job as a European correspondent with Hearst Newspapers, witnessing the brutality of the Nazi rise to power.

With the outbreak of World War II, Nancy joined the French Resistance. When the network she served was compromised, she was arrested but released when the Germans believed a friend's concocted story of the supposed

infidelity of her husband, Henri Fiocca. After several attempts, she reached London and volunteered for the SOE. Fiocca chose to remain in France. He fell into the hands of the Gestapo and was tortured to death without revealing Nancy's whereabouts.

On the night of 29 April 1944, Wake parachuted into France and joined the band of Maquis fighters led by Captain Henri Tardivat in the Troncais Forest. She trained Maquis recruits and once rode a bicycle more than 500 kilometres to deliver a top-secret codebook. During one raid she silenced a German sentry, delivering a fatal judo chop with her bare hands.

Wake survived the war, receiving the George Medal, the US Medal of Freedom, the French Croix de Guerre and other decorations for valour. She died in London in 2011 at age 98.



Nancy was given many awards



Nancy was determined to have a role in the war

"Wake parachuted into France and joined the band of Maquis fighters"

# MERLIN MINSHALL



Serving with Ian Fleming in Naval Intelligence brought new adventure

Merlin Minshall was an adventurer. After graduating from London University, he set out in 1931 to become the first Englishman to sail across Europe to the Black Sea. An avid auto racer, he won the Italian Foreign Challenge in 1937 where Italian dictator Benito Mussolini presented the trophy. Minshall later became first to drive an auto with an air-cooled engine across the Sahara.

With the outbreak of war in 1939, Minshall reported for duty with the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve where he served under Ian Fleming for a time. In 1940, he participated in a failed plan to block the Danube River with barges to impede the flow of oil to Germany, and he led Operation Shamrock, a joint Naval Intelligence-SOE mission monitoring German U-boat traffic along coastal France. In 1941, he assisted the hunt for the German battleship Bismarck while commanding a section at HMS Flowerdown, a Sussex wireless station, and served in the Pacific.

Minshall initially denied that Fleming had modelled James Bond after him but later went on to embrace the idea. Married four times, he died aged 80 in 1987.

# JOHN MOE



Dual citizen of Britain and Norway fed false information to the Nazis

Along with his companion Tor Glad, John Moe landed at Grovie on Scotland's Moray Firth, on 7 April 1941. The duo had been recruited by the German Abwehr to operate in Britain and commit acts of sabotage; however, they immediately approached local authorities and were interrogated by MI5 and MI6. Both were turned under the MI5 XX programme as double agents, committing staged acts of sabotage against worthless targets with explosives supplied by the Germans. Nicknamed Mutt and Jeff, they fed false information to the Abwehr by radio before the Allied invasion of North Africa, prompting Germany to keep thousands of troops in Scandinavia.



Double agents Moe and Glad helped to divert thousands of Nazis away from the fight



## COLIN GUBBINS

The disciplined and dapper Scotsman who headed up the Special Operations Executive



The prime mover in the Special Operations Executive (SOE), this energetic Scotsman served with distinction in the Royal


Artillery in World War I before going on to fight in Russia for the White Army and then to Ireland, where he fought in the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-21. His experiences in these two arenas gave him a keen insight into guerrilla warfare and he went on to author a number of training manuals, such as 1939's *Partisan Leader's Handbook*, which outlined the principles of sabotage and guerrilla warfare, for British Military Intelligence.

He worked on establishing the Auxiliary Units, which would fight

a resistance war in the UK should the Germans complete a successful invasion, before he was invited to oversee the SOE. He took the codename M (a moniker borrowed by Fleming when he wrote his James Bond novels). Under his guidance, the SOE formed separate sections to co-ordinate activities in specific countries, with the greatest concentration focusing on France. The SOE enjoyed many successes and endured many failures, including a disastrous campaign in the Netherlands that cost many agents' lives.

As the head of the SOE, Gubbins co-ordinated the activities of resistance movements all around the world as well as consulting with the Foreign Office, the chiefs of staff, representatives of the resistance organisations, governments-in-exile and other agencies including his counterparts in the American Office of Strategic Services.

## HENRI DÉRICOURT

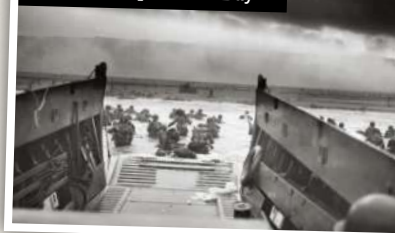
The inscrutable Frenchman's history remains a mystery to this day 

After escaping to Britain in August 1942, Frenchman Henri Déricourt joined the SOE and was parachuted back into his native land in January of the following year. He worked mainly for the Prosper network and arranged the transportation of over 60 SOE agents including Noor Inayat Khan, Vera Leigh, Yolande Beekman, Eliane Plewman, Diana Rowden, Jack Agazarian, Francis Suttill, Pearl Witherington and Lise de Baissac.

When the Prosper network was compromised, the likes of Agazarian and Suttill believed Déricourt might have been working against them as a double agent. In the aftermath of World War II, evidence emerged that Déricourt was guilty of providing information to the Gestapo that led to the arrest and execution of several agents including Inayat Khan, Agazarian and Suttill, among others. When interviewed for the book *Double Agent*, Déricourt claimed that the SEO had used him as a triple agent. Aware that the Gestapo had compromised the Prosper network, he said, the SEO deliberately sacrificed key agents in a bid to divert Nazi attention from Operation Overlord and the D-Day landings in Normandy in Operation Neptune.

Déricourt was reportedly killed in an air crash over Laos in November 1962. His body was never found, however, and suggestions abound that his death was faked so that he might live a new life under an assumed name.

Déricourt claims agents were sacrificed to protect D-Day



## EDDIE MYERS

Engineer who sabotaged the Gorgopotamos viaduct



Lieutenant-Colonel Eddie Myers was the commanding officer on Operation Harling, an SOE mission held in conjunction with Greek Resistance groups, which aimed to destroy the viaduct and thereby hamper Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's supply route to North Africa. The sabotage was a success and proved that guerrillas working in conjunction with Allied officers could achieve spectacular results in occupied Europe. Myers remained on the ground, building his own guerrilla network, whose further successes included the destruction of the Asopos viaduct.

## JACK AGAZARIAN

The selfless spy who made the ultimate sacrifice

RAF officer Jack Agazarian more than proved his mettle when he decided to return to France for a second mission in July 1943, even though the Gestapo knew who he was from his time with the Physician network. His bravery was further amplified when he stood in for his commanding officer, Nicholas Bodington, at a meeting that they felt might end up being a trap. It was, and Agazarian was arrested and subsequently killed. His wife also worked for SOE's F Section.

## VIOLETTE SZABO

The brave agent who avenged her husband




Born Violette Bushell, Szabo joined the SOE in July 1943 following the death of her husband, Etienne Szabo, at El Alamein. Her first mission, which she completed, was to check if one of the Prosper network sub-chains had been compromised. She was then parachuted back into France just two days after D-Day in order to disrupt German communications.

Shortly after landing, when travelling with French Resistance fighter Jacques Dufour and Jean Bariaud, her car ran into a German roadblock; she and Dufour laid down covering fire while the unarmed Bariaud escaped. They then retreated towards a wood, but Szabo had an ankle injury and in the chase it gave way, forcing her to a standstill. She continued the firefight to let Dufour get away until she was captured. She was taken to the Ravensbrück, a concentration camp for women, where she was executed in February 1945. Her bravery saw her become the second woman to win the George Cross, her citation stating that while she was brutally tortured, she never surrendered any significant information.



# MARIAN REJEWSKI

The Polish mathematician who reconstructed the Enigma cipher machine 

Significant early success in solving the cryptologic riddle of the German Enigma cipher machine was accomplished by a trio of Polish mathematicians in the 1930s. Marian Rejewski, Henryk Zygalski and Jerzy Różycki collaborated in the effort, and Rejewski actually made an Enigma machine in 1932 without previously having seen one.

Rejewski was born in 1905 in Bromberg, at that time part of the German Empire. He attended Poznan University during the 1920s, and while Polish cryptanalysts had worked on Enigma for a time, their success had been limited. In the autumn of 1932, the task was handed to Rejewski.

Rejewski had only a general understanding of how the machine's system of rotors functioned and received some assistance from French sources. Within just a matter of days, he managed to untangle the labyrinth of internal wiring that made the Enigma a revolutionary encoding machine with millions of possible letter combinations. The Poles subsequently went on to pioneer invaluable techniques for cracking Enigma decryptions.

Weeks before the German invasion of Poland that started World War II, the Polish mathematicians met at Pyry, south of Warsaw, with British and French intelligence officers, revealing their successes. For British Intelligence, the progress of the Poles offered a great leap forward, allowing them to begin reading decrypted Enigma messages, dubbed Ultra, within months.

The Poles continued working in France until late 1942. Rejewski and Zygalski escaped to England the following summer and were enlisted in the Polish Army, cracking other German codes. Meanwhile, British and American cryptanalysts had taken the lead in the decryption of Enigma transmissions. The Poles, who had provided vital assistance, were excluded from further participation and their role remained obscure for some time. Rejewski died in 1980, aged 78. 20 years later, he was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta, Poland's highest civilian decoration.



**"The progress of the Poles offered a great leap forward"**



## SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS

A step-by-step guide to the training of Special Operations Executive hopefuls

### 1 *Introductory course*

Those thought suitable for a role in the SOE were sent first on a two- or three-week course, where they would engage in physical fitness exercises, basic map reading and weapons work, though the recruits were not told that they were testing for the SOE. There was also said to be a well-stocked bar to see how potential agents might behave when alcohol was liberally poured.

### 2 *Group A training*

Those that passed the initial course were sent for a three- or four-week course in paramilitary techniques up in Scotland, most famously at Arisaig. Here they learned about small arms, as well taking lessons in unarmed combat (developed by former Shanghai police officers Sykes and Fairbairn), sabotage and demolition, intensive map reading and basic infantry tactical training.

### 3 *Group B training*

It was likely that the first two courses might wheedle out around 60 per cent of candidates, the remainder passing on to Group B training in the country houses around Beaulieu and the New Forest. Here they learned defensive lessons – about enemy police services and how to respond to their lines of questioning. They were also taught how to live their cover with conviction.

### 4 *Group B testing*

During the Group B work, recruits were also given lessons in intelligence gathering and reporting their findings back to England via elementary coding before they took a practical passing-out test that lasted several days. Recruits were sent off in small groups with a specific mission – sabotage, theft of a Sten gun and so on – which might also require them picking up an accomplice along the way.

### 5 *Parachute training*

Once recruits graduated from Beaulieu they were sent for more technical training, including parachuting for those to be dropped overseas. This was taught from a merchant's house near Manchester. Drops were made into the grounds at Tatton Park from Whitley aircraft. The drop suits were developed with pockets for a spade, so the agents could bury the parachute on landing.

### 6 *Specialist training*

There were a number of specialist courses for graduates, like the wireless school at Thame Park. There were courses in safe-breaking and clandestine printing as well as advanced sabotage techniques. Of those who failed the early courses, meanwhile, many were sent to the 'cooler' at Inverlair, where they were encouraged to forget the little they had learned about secret operations.



# EINAR SKINNARLAND

The Norwegian nationalist who helped thwart Hitler's atomic ambitions

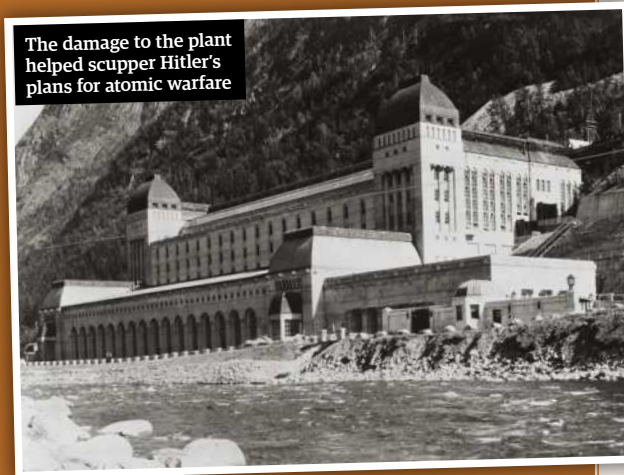
When an SOE raiding party captured a Norwegian ship in March 1942, they discovered on board Einar Skinnarland, who was eager to help fight the German invaders in his homeland. He came from Rjukan, which was close to Vemork, home to Norsk Hydro, where the Germans were bidding to propel their atomic bomb development with the use of heavy water (deuterium oxide).

A mission to destroy the plant passed to the SOE, who parachuted Skinnarland back into Norway and there he befriended the chief engineer at the plant, learned plenty of information necessary for a coup-de-main operation, and relayed this by radio to the SOE. On the ground, he then received a number of operatives who were to help with the landing of two British gliders carrying commando-engineers set to implement Operation Freshman. Sadly, both gliders crashed in bad weather and the survivors were captured, tortured and executed by the Gestapo. Security at the plant was beefed up.

Undeterred, Skinnarland and the SOE tried again and with Operation Gunnerside on 28-29 February 1943, they achieved their aim, Skinnarland helping commandoes to sneak into the plant and set charges. The saboteurs only met one worker during the operation - he agreed to help, providing he was allowed to retrieve his eyeglasses! The explosion severely damaged the plant and wreaked havoc with Hitler's atomic ambitions. It is said that 3,000 German soldiers were dispatched to comb the area for the commandos, all of whom escaped, with four remaining in the region for further work with the Resistance.

The story was immortalised in the 1948 Franco-Norwegian film *Operation Swallow: The Battle for Heavy Water* and then the 1965 Kirk Douglas film *The Heroes of Telemark*. Skinnarland continued to maintain radio contact between the local elements of the Norwegian resistance and SOE headquarters in London until the end of the war.

The damage to the plant helped scupper Hitler's plans for atomic warfare



A vial of deuterium oxide, a vital component of the Nazi's atomic bomb ambitions

# HENRYK ZYGALSKI

The Polish cryptologist who helped crack Enigma

One of a trio of Polish mathematicians who performed early cryptanalytic work on Enigma encoded German ciphers, Zygalski developed perforated sheets, later known as 'Zygalski sheets', as keys to a manual method of determining settings of Enigma machine rotors. In 1939, Zygalski participated in a pivotal meeting near Warsaw with representatives of the British and French intelligence communities, revealing the substantial progress the Poles had made in cracking Enigma. Along with fellow Pole Marian Rejewski, Zygalski reached England in the summer of 1943. He joined the Polish Army and worked on other ciphers but was excluded from further involvement in Enigma.



# EDDIE CHAPMAN

The criminal turned agent who won the Iron Cross

Eddie Chapman's release from prison in Jersey saw him emerge into an occupied land and he immediately offered his services to the German secret service, the Abwehr. He agreed to sabotage the De Havilland factory but on his return to the UK turned himself in and worked as a double agent, code-named ZigZag. With help from MI5 he faked the bombing of the factory before returning to Germany and may have been the only British citizen to earn an Iron Cross.



# KIM PHILBY

The most notorious member of the Cambridge Five

Britain ran an excellent double-cross network, but it wasn't immune from the same treatment. Appointed to MI6 in 1940, Philby passed more than 1,000 secret documents to the Soviet Union. Notorious for his actions after World War II, in a perverse way his perfidy helped secure the Allied war effort, convincing Stalin that Japan had no designs on the USSR and letting them concentrate their forces on the Eastern Front.





# RONALD SETH



A double agent whose fantastic stories baffled friends and foes alike

After teaching in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, Ronald Seth volunteered to join the SOE in a bid to stir up revolt against the Nazis in the Baltic States. He was codenamed Blunderhead and in October 1942, he parachuted into Estonia. Nothing more was heard from him until the April of the following year when a file fell into Allied hands detailing the capture and interrogation of a British spy called Ronald Seth who had, apparently, revealed everything about his SOE training and mission. The SOE's signal office was ordered to desist from listening out for any further contact.

Not long after the liberation of Paris, however, a document was passed to the War Office purporting to be from Blunderhead. It outlined a fantastic tale, recording how his initial landing had dropped him amid a group of German soldiers, who he'd fought off before executing a sabotage campaign while living off the land. However, he was eventually captured and tortured, he said, and he went on to claim

that he had agreed to help the Germans against the Russians.

His report revealed how he had worked in Paris and undergone training with the German secret service, Abwehr, although when the enemy lost confidence with him he was sent to a prisoner of war camp to serve as an informer. He maintained that all the while he was still serving the SOE. The intrigue was enhanced when another letter appeared a short while later claiming that he was now operating in a prisoner of war camp at Limburg under the name of Captain John De Witt.

Finally, in April 1945 as the war was coming to an end, he walked into the British legation in Bern, and said that he was carrying peace proposals from Himmler and should therefore be flown home. MI5 interrogated him at length and were unable to unpick the fact from fiction. Whatever its veracity, Blunderhead's story remains one of the most fantastic ever linked to an SOE agent.



Ethnic Germans in Tallinn cheer the arrival of the Wehrmacht and the retreat of the Red Army

"He was eventually captured and tortured"

## The hidden world war

### UNITED STATES

**Office of Strategic Services:** Created by the United States in spring 1942, the charge of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was to conduct clandestine operations in foreign countries and behind enemy lines.

**Federal Bureau of Investigation:** A domestic law enforcement, security and intelligence service of the US government, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) pursued espionage cases in the United States in addition to pursuing surveillance of suspicious individuals.

### FRANCE

**Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action:** The French Central Bureau of Intelligence and Operations (BCRA) was created by the Free French command after the fall of France in spring 1940 and later became the modern French intelligence service.

### ITALY

**Servizio Informazioni Militare (SIM):** Functionally, the Italian SIM was equivalent in Fascist Italy to the Abwehr in Nazi Germany. SIM was officially a directorate of the Italian Army, and its cryptology section achieved notable successes.

### SOVIET UNION

**NKVD:** The Soviet People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) was formed in 1934. Before and during World War II the NKVD exercised broad power relating to state security both military and civilian.

**SMERSH:** Constituted in the spring of 1943, SMERSH served as the primary Soviet directorate of counterintelligence, whose aim was to root out enemy agents and subversives. Its acronym stood literally for 'Death to Spies.'

### JAPAN

**Kempeitai:** Officially the Kempeitai served as the military police section of the Imperial Japanese Army; however, its authority extended to espionage, counterintelligence and secret police operations during World War II.

### GERMANY

**Abwehr:** Formed in 1920 against the terms of the Versailles Treaty, the Abwehr evolved under the Nazis as the primary foreign and domestic intelligence of the German military high command before and during World War II.

**RSHA:** Controlled directly by Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler and the SS, the RSHA (Reich Main Security Office) ruthlessly pursued enemies of the Third Reich in Germany and other occupied countries from 1939.





# The Nuremberg Trials

After the dust settled over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the final battle of World War II began - the fight to hold its greatest war criminals to account

Words Hareth Al Bustani



As early as 1943, faced with the horrific nature and colossal scope of Nazi atrocities, the Allies resolved to hold them to account. After Germany surrendered, the Soviets were initially in favour of simply executing them, as was Churchill, echoing the sentiments of the British and American public. However, US Secretary of War Henry Stimson argued that if the Allies simply carried out executions without due

legal process, their own "moral position" would be thrown into doubt. So on 9 August 1945 the Allies set up the world's first international military tribunal to prosecute the leading figures in each complicit department.

The Major War Criminals Trial was held in Nuremberg - the home of Adolf Hitler's grand annual Nazi rallies and the ceremonial heart of Goebbels' propaganda machine. Each country put forward a pair of judges as well as a prosecution counsel, with American Robert H Jackson instrumental in organising and designing the process to come. In his opening statement he emphasised, "The record on which we judge these defendants today is the record on which history will judge us tomorrow. To pass these defendants a poisoned chalice is to put it to our lips as well."

The courts pursued indictments against 24 Nazis for the crimes of common plan or conspiracy, crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity. They also indicted the Reich government itself and other organisations such as the Nazi Party, SS, Gestapo and the

Wehrmacht. Defendants appointed their own lawyers or else the Tribunal did so on their behalf, with chief counsels supported by 70 assistants, lawyers and clerks.

The defendants enjoyed the right to a public trial, with a special gallery built to seat 250 people. If defendants did not want to hire one of the Tribunal's 60 pre-approved lawyers and legal professors, their chosen counsel would still need to be approved. Lord Justice Lawrence criticised Allied powers for allowing the press to attack these lawyers and insisted that further attacks would not be tolerated.

Unfamiliar with the Anglo-American legal process and only given a month to prepare, German defence lawyers were at a serious disadvantage. Moreover, they were not provided with ample facilities, nor were they privy to much of the vast quantities of evidence collected by the prosecution - including some of the most exonerating material. They were also denied the opportunity to appeal the verdict.

On the whole, however, Lord Justice Lawrence went to great lengths to ensure the defendants were given a fair trial. When an impatient Justice Jackson asked Reich Marshal Göring to limit his lengthy answers to a simple 'yes' or 'no', Lawrence advocated for the defendant, claiming that he "ought to be allowed to make what explanation he thinks right".

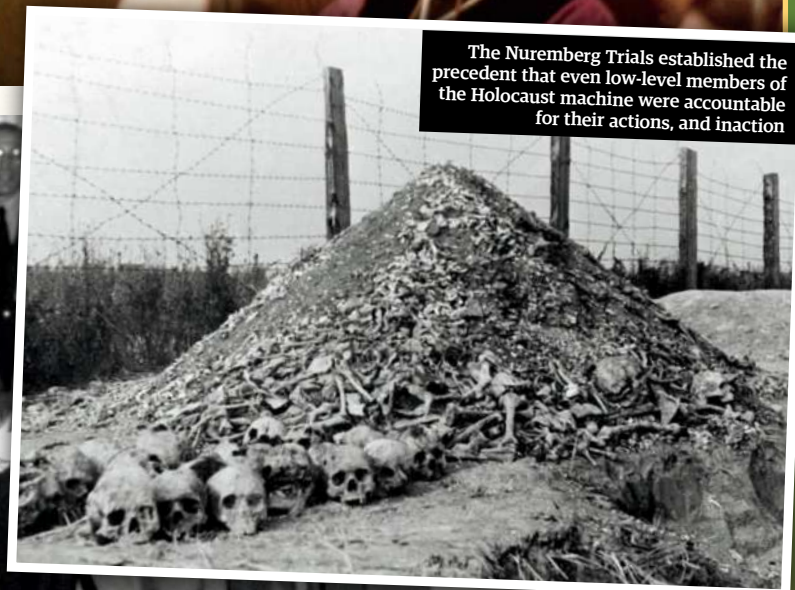




# The Nuremberg Trials



The Major War Criminals Trial at Nuremberg was established to hold prominent Nazis to account



The Nuremberg Trials established the precedent that even low-level members of the Holocaust machine were accountable for their actions, and inaction



Held entirely in public, the trials sparked a media sensation as the world waited to hear the fates of the Nazi war criminals

“Lord Justice Lawrence went to great lengths to ensure defendants had a fair trial”



Ultimately, the trial was a groundbreaking one, held on an international stage and involving various powers with their own systems of law and governance. In its wake it established the principle of international law. At its close, Justice Jackson concluded, "The future will never have to ask, with misgiving, what could the Nazis have said in their favour." He added, "They have been given the kind of a trial which they, in the days of their pomp and power, never gave to any man."

On 30 September and 1 October 1946, after nine long months involving 403 open sessions, copious cross-examinations and 100 witness accounts, the proceedings came to a close. 12 of the defendants were sentenced to death, hung atop Nuremberg Prison's old gymnasium and cremated. Gestapo founder Hermann Göring swallowed cyanide hours before he was due to hang. Three others were sentenced to life in prison and four more to lengthy sentences at the Allied War Criminals Prison in Berlin-Spandau, though some, such as the economist Hjalmar Schacht, were found not guilty. The leadership of the Nazi Party, Gestapo, SS and SD were all deemed criminal organisations, save for Himmler's 'Reiter' Equestrian SS.

The Major War Criminals Trial was followed by a series of prosecutions known as the

Subsequent Nuremberg Trials. Unlike the international tribunal set up for the former, these 12 trials were held between 1946 and 1969 before US tribunals in Nuremberg. In total, 177 senior SS and police commanders, military personnel, diplomats, physicians, judges, industrialists and civil servants were tried, indicating the tentacular reach of the Nazi death machine. Among them, 25 were found not guilty, 98 were sentenced to long prison terms, 20 to life in prison and 24 to death – though only 13 were executed.

The Nuremberg Trials allowed the world to comprehend the full extent of Nazi war crimes, with even low-level soldiers held to account. They forced average Germans to come to terms with the true face of their one-time saviour Adolf Hitler and his demented vision of Aryan supremacy at all costs.

After the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, efforts to prosecute further Nazi crimes were frustrated by German courts, who repeatedly dismissed cases, acquitted defendants and handed out soft sentences. Many

in the country had questioned the legitimacy of military tribunals, with justice determined and distributed by the war's victorious powers. Indeed, the Soviet judge Major-General Iona Nikitchenko, one of the four voting judges, frankly admitted that he had considered the trial an exercise in distributing punishment to men already presumed guilty.

In 1958, the Ulm Einsatzgruppen Trial ignited widespread interest, leading West Germany to create its own office for the purpose of investigating Nazi crimes. The issue gained an







Although many of Cambodia's genocidal Khmer Rouge regime escaped justice, the Khmer Rouge Tribunal has held some of its senior-most members to account

## "Germany's Auschwitz Trial only convicted 17"

even higher profile when Adolf Eichmann, one of the leading architects of the Holocaust, was captured in Argentina, tried in Israel and hung in 1962.

From 1963 to 1965, Germany's Auschwitz Trial only led to the conviction of 17 SS members, a paltry number in the face of the volume of human suffering inflicted in the camp. Similarly, a trial held in Düsseldorf from 1975 to 1981 investigating the Majdanek extermination camp revealed the difficulty in prosecuting crimes three decades after the fact.

Asides from establishing the notion of international criminal law, the Nuremberg Trials laid the foundation for the International Criminal Court, 1948's Genocide Convention and Universal Declaration of Human rights, the Geneva Convention on the Laws and Customs of War, the Nuremberg Principles of 1950 and the 1968 Convention on the Abolition of the Statute of Limitations on War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity.

The Tribunal also served as the framework for today's International Criminal Court in Den Haag in the Netherlands, which has investigated war crimes committed by a number of regimes, including those of the ruthless Khmer Rouge, a tribunal that saw collaboration between the UN and Cambodia.



Inspired by the principles of Nuremberg, the International Criminal Court has investigated international war crimes from Mali to the occupied Palestinian territory

## THE INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL FOR THE FAR EAST

At the Tokyo Tribunal, Japan's war criminals put the Nuremberg model to the test

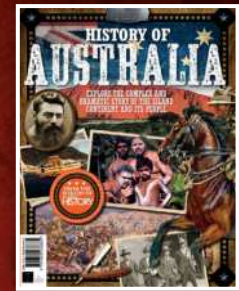
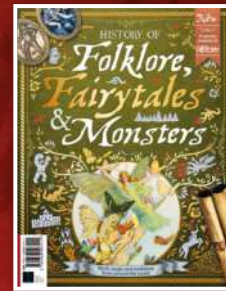
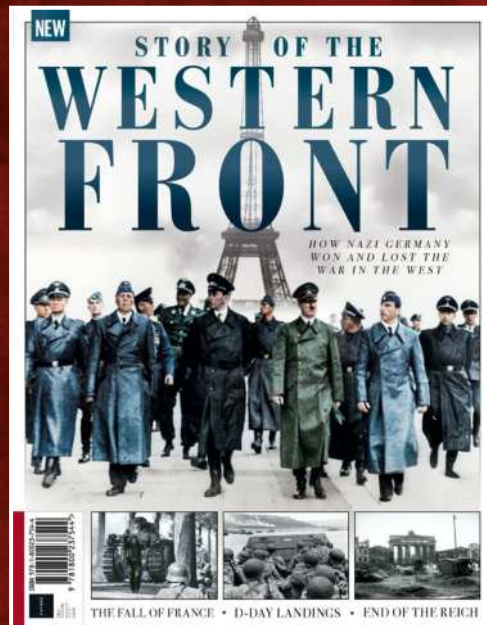
Equally guilty of war crimes during World War II, the Japanese military was forced to confront the atrocities it committed during the conflict in a war crimes tribunal that began on 29 April 1946.

A total of 11 countries (including Britain and the USSR) provided judges for the trial, which charged 28 prominent military and political figures with over 50 counts. The tribunal lasted until 12 November 1948 and ultimately found 47 of the defendants guilty of one charge or more (two defendants died during the trial and the other was deemed unfit to stand). Sentences ranged from imprisonment to execution.



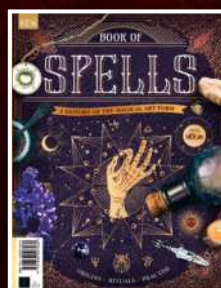
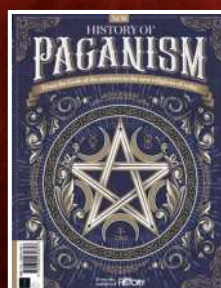
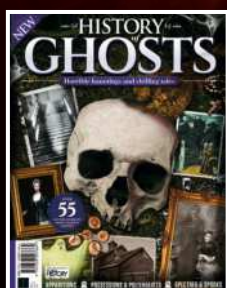
Former foreign minister Kōki Hirota was controversially sentenced to hang for failing to do everything in his power to stop the Rape of Nanjing





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